

ALARIC THE GOTH

MARCEL BRION



EUROPE IN 485.

Showing the territories of the
GOTHIC NATIONS.

Earlier Seats of the Goths thus (Goths A.D. 360)

Scale of Miles
50 0 50 100 200 300



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ALARIC THE GOTH



Alaric Rides Roughshod Through Rome



ALARIC

The Goth

BY

MARCEL BRION

TRANSLATED BY

FREDERICK H. MARTENS

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK

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Prologue: THEODOSIUS DIES

IN his great bed of gold, encrusted with ivory and rare woods, shivering beneath furs and purple coverlets, agonizes the Emperor Theodosius. His hands still motion as though clinging to all that is escaping them — power, glory, life itself. In this immense confusion that turns everything upside down he feels a tragic regret to think he will no longer be alive, though there is yet so much to do. Death brings him neither forgetfulness nor indifference. His mind still dwells on the financial insecurity, the Barbarians who threaten the frontier, the religious dissensions that imperil a fragile Christianity.

Now that he counts for nothing, having divided the empire between his sons, giving the Occident to Honorius, the Orient to Arcadius, he should be able tranquilly to close his eyes and rest. Has he not provided wise counsellors, prudent regents for them? Yet the cares that have harassed him his life long do not abandon him on his death-bed. He still has an unuttered thought, an important observation to make regarding an army on the Danube or in Amorica. He wishes to recommend that once he is dead, the persecution of the pagans cease. He tries to speak, to raise his hands, but his strength no longer suffices, and his doting spirit vainly pursues new inquietudes or, possibly, regrets.

In this Milanese palace, where his recent victories have just been celebrated, all the high dignitaries of the empire are gathered about him. The governors of

provinces, sent for in haste, the ministers, the heads of the army, the patricians. His death-agony prolonging itself, its spectators grow weary of watching this old man die. Their eyes turn away from him, seeking familiar faces, those of friends or foes, in the great hall. Seeing all these disturbed faces the Emperor might think his mortal anguish was rending their compassionate hearts. Yet he is still sufficiently lucid to divine their preoccupations. In the presence of the master who is passing, all those watching him are trying to guess who will be the master to come. In their dalmatics sown with large black crosses, the bishops reflect that the pagans may take advantage of the confusion openly to restore the idols they worship in secret. And will not the heretics also grow bolder? The generals foresee the disorganization that the division of the empire will introduce in the army. How will the receipts and imposts be allocated, the treasury officials ask themselves?

Selfish ambitions are already aroused. The courtiers and eunuchs are already thinking of how to please the new emperor. Shall they flatter his vices or his virtues? This year of 395, with the disappearance of Theodosius, heralds an era of magnificent prosperity for intriguers, rascals, bootlickers of the antechamber — the lobbyists of that day — incapable officers and dishonest officials. A dead emperor means the corpse of an empire to despoil. The appetites of all are eager for the prodigious fleshing, since Theodosius's sons will be incapable of governing their states, and will be puppets in the hands of the tutors assigned them by the dying man.

Curious eyes observe the men who will govern. The emperor Theodosius's choice is criticized. Rufinus! a

cobbler's son from a Pyrenean village at the other end of Gaul. And Flavius Stilicho, another Barbarian, whose father commanded those hairy squadrons!

If only they were discreet enough to efface themselves in favor of their wards. Yet, should they decide to seize the purple, mount the throne, found a dynasty, who could prevent them? Africans, Germans, had already succeeded the Caesars. If so, why not one of these Barbarian chiefs standing at the back of the hall, for the moment intimidated by majesty and by death — one of these Goths or Vandals. Why not Gainas, Sarus, Merobandus or Fravitta? When an empire falls, can one tell who'll pick it up and pocket it?

Uneasy glances question all faces. They are not looking for signs of grief, but for the secret trembling that reveals the prick of ambition, the ungovernable itch for power. The times are so troubled that any one may entertain extravagant hopes, and since intrigue alone makes possible the usurpation of power, who, among those gathered about the imperial death-bed, is not already outlining audacious projects, complots or dreams?

The priests murmur prayers. The death-struggle is long drawn out. The dignitaries, standing, feel themselves yielding to fatigue and irritation. Women weep. Theodosius, with the end drawing near, suddenly realizes that he is as destitute and wretched as the poorest beggar in his realm.

His last recommendations to Stilicho have been to spare those whom his own pitiless fervor had persecuted. The ridiculous ceremonies of paganism, of course, are not to be sanctioned, nor the mysterious rites of the sects swarming midway between Christ

and the false gods; but those whom conscience has led astray are to be freely welcomed by the new religion.

He knew it still had many obstacles to encounter. The philosophers mocked Christianity and secretly worshipped the ancient guardians of the empire. In the recesses of deserted temples were still to be found some aged vestals, some forgotten hierophants. Many senators and high functionaries hardly took the trouble to hide their attachment to the ancient idols. Harmless at present, biding its time in secret sanctuaries, would not paganism resume the offensive once he, Theodosius, was powerless to resist?

Fortunately Stilicho is on hand to watch over everything. The one assuagement of the emperor's disquietudes comes from the presence at his bedside of this Vandal — the most reliable, courageous and energetic man in the Roman world. Theodosius knows he can count upon the fidelity of this honest and loyal soldier. Stilicho will protect the empire and the emperor, that eleven-year-old child, too frail himself to support so heavy a burden.

The Vandal pushes his royal ward, young Honorius, toward the bed. Honorius still holds little Maria, Stilicho's daughter, by the hand, for Theodosius has ordered their betrothal in order to create still another link between the family of the Regent of the Occident and his own.

At the same moment, however, Arcadius, the new Emperor of the Orient moves toward the bed from the opposite side. Does he at all regret his father's death? No one knows. His stolid face shows no trace of feeling; and he is always thus, somnolent, trailing along his

feeble body and his drowsing, futile spirit. He is already weighed down by his coming responsibilities, but refuses to think of them. What do they matter to him: Rufinus will do whatever is necessary.

And seeing the impatient, well-nigh brutal gesture with which the Regent of the Orient conducts him to his father, one feels that this insignificant monarch to be has no will save that of his minister.

The betrothal of Maria and Honorius has roused Rufinus to a rage that he seeks to conceal. How could he have been such a fool as to leave his own daughter in Constantinople, the daughter whom he dreams of casting into his master's arms and bed? Once more Stilicho has gone him one better, and he assures himself that as soon as the emperor has returned to Byzantium he will, by fair means or foul, make him marry the woman he has in mind for him, and whose charms he praises without let-up.

All the dignitaries of the empire have louted low before the young pair, and Stilicho has accepted their homage with a truly royal pride and condescension. One might really think that he himself was the emperor! And his wife, Serena, with what an air she received her felicitations!

Seeing the number of his familiars who slyly leave him to kiss the Vandal's hand, Rufinus realizes that this day crowns Stilicho's triumph. Entrusted with Theodosius's last recommendations, father-in-law and guardian of the Emperor of the Occident, commander of the troops, he is the real master of the empire. And to increase his power and influence, the dying man has just made him the guardian of his other son, Arcadius, as though that sovereign of eighteen needed another

perceptor, as though Rufinus were not there to direct him!

Theodosius's daughter, little Galla Placidia, too, had been confided to Serena.

Among the dignitaries those not obsessed with ambition and a servile desire to please the new master, deplore the decadence of the empire and the absence of true Romans. Who are the men who count to-day? Barbarians or provincials. Stilicho has often saved Rome, yet he remains a German for all that.

Rufinus? All the world knows that he was born in the shop of a wretched Gascon artisan, and that intrigue alone has raised him to power.

Eutropius, the eunuch, Theodosius's confidential man, the offspring of Egyptian slaves, was himself a slave, and who knows through what shady adventures he had passed in order to become one of the most important personages in Constantinople? And if the administration of the realm has passed into the hands of these men, what can one say of those in command of the army? There is Leo, a fat and incapable general who had been a carder in a women's flax-spinning workshop; Hosius, once a scullion in Spain; Gainas the Goth, perfidious and ever ready to betray; Fravitta, who apes Roman manners without being able to make one forget his tribal origin.

Opportunities are not wanting to deplore the uncertainties of the times, the religious wars in the interior, the Barbarian invasions in the East, the provincial revolts and the boldness of agitators. Yet, to be honest, very few are preoccupied with the country's well-being. Intrigue has driven honest men away. Discouraged, kept aloof from positions of trust, and suspected men,

they are reduced to flee to distant provinces, there to regret at leisure the grandeur that was Rome. Those who remain are adventurers, fishers in troubled waters, courtiers and go-betweens. Hence one sees them, little by little, withdraw from the death-bed to approach the youthful emperors. They are already estimating possible profits, already soliciting; and their insatiable cupidity, their jealousy, transform their hypocritical asides into noisy reclamations.

Suddenly all movement ceases. Theodosius is breathing his last. His head has fallen back on his purple cushion, and something like a murmur of relief comes from the throng exasperated by too long a wait. The functionaries defile before Arcadius and Honorius, a formal, deferential processional in accordance with etiquette. But it is around Stilicho that the greeds of all press and jostle.

The Vandal views with contempt the crowd of lick-spittles and intriguers besieging him. He steps behind the young Emperor in order to remind these shameless office-seekers that he is merely the Regent, the tutor of Honorius; but though they kiss the child's hands as a matter of form, their genuflexions are in reality addressed to the minister. Every one of these courtiers hates and despises him from the bottom of his heart — a Barbarian! Each is ready to tread him under foot on the morrow if he stumble and, Fortune willing, is ready to take his place; for who among them questions his own worthiness? To-day, however, all pay homage to the man who will direct the child-emperor's acts and wishes. So the evening of death ends in a tumult of unleashed cupidity and impious gladness.

Stilicho's triumph annihilates Rufinus's great expect-

tations. He would have been willing — since needs must — to divide the empire with Stilicho, for in their hands the two emperors will be no more than complaisant marionettes. Provided their indolence and their pleasures are not disturbed they will give no trouble. The Vandal should have known it was to his interest not to displease the Regent of the East. It would have been so easy to have come to an understanding. In spite of all his cynicism, however, Rufinus has not dared suggest a trade. He is too well aware how the soldier's loyalty would reject any offer to divide spoils. The cobbler's son of Elusis had several times discreetly hinted at a delimitation of spheres of influence, but Stilicho either had not understood or he had refused to understand. With the baseness of an intriguer, incapable of crediting sentiments he cannot feel, Rufinus suspected that the attitude of the master of the army reflected vast astuteness and an insatiable ambition. Was he to think his devotion to the emperor and the empire sincere, inspired by his attachment to Rome and to his plighted word faithfully to serve his masters? Stilicho's irritation at the impudent homages offered him were due, so thought Rufinus, purely to calculation and meant to disguise his ambition and his joy. In truth Theodosius's death had caused the Vandal real sorrow, for he regretted his comrade at arms and friend as well as his master. He knew that once the Emperor was no more the greeds of all would be frenziedly unchained, and would not stop at provoking civil war or dismembering the empire, pillaging the treasury in order to satisfy their cupidity. The eleven-year-old Caesar whose guardian and counsellor he was had not one of the qualities that make a king. His life long he would

be the same inconsequent child that he now was, and it would be necessary to take into account his caprices, while avoiding the disastrous consequences they could not help but entail; to govern without him and, at a pinch, in spite of him, without diminishing the prestige of that imperial grandeur which, he felt, must invest the boy.

Disturbed by these anxieties, and groaning under the splendid burden of his recent glory, he saw Rufinus's glance pass in review the line of Barbarian chiefs. Already the Regent of the East was seeking among them the man who, in a given case, he could set up in opposition to Stilicho. His hatred did not blind him to the fact that it would be difficult to find an adversary to cope with the Vandal, the empire's greatest general. He needed a soldier, for war was his sole recourse. If he allowed Stilicho to exercise the guardianship which Theodosius had bestowed in all effect, and to gain an influence over such an imperial caricature as Arcadius, then all was over with him. Unable to conceal his peculations, robbed of his dependants, he could look forward only to exile. To remain the real master of the East he must prevent Stilicho from coming to Constantinople, he must sow dissension and, if needs be, provoke a war.

Pretexts would not be wanting. One might find one, for example, in the recent division Theodosius had made before he died: he had stipulated therein that the province of Illyricum, comprising Greece, Epirus and Macedonia, for many years a part of the empire of the West, was to be returned to Constantinople. It was a wise provision and one justified by many political and strategic reasons. But Rufinus foresaw that Stilicho would

refuse to give up Illyricum. And, in fact, it went against Theodosius's minister to hand over to the incapable Arcadius and his guardian a rich province, exposed to Barbarian invasions, whose possession was one of the keys of the empire.

Rufinus would have no difficulty in persuading his master that the repossession of Greece should be immediate, and by exciting his self-esteem and pride, show him that it was necessary to take forcible possession of it, should his brother refuse to cede it. Yet lest this war he planned end in disaster, he must have a competent general to command his army. Not one of the chiefs present could withstand Stilicho. The men who had accompanied Theodosius to Italy had been either incapable or brutish; the Vandal's bravery alone had ensured victory. Yet might there not be in the provinces some neglected Barbarian captain whose military genius was equal to Stilicho's own?

It was then Rufinus remembered that the Goths quartered in Moesia had raised on the shield and proclaimed king a young Balthung who had distinguished himself in the preceding campaigns. In spite of this he had not been rewarded, but had been sent off with his tribe into camp on the frontier. In the opinion of all the generals, despite the jealousies that divided them, this Goth possessed all the qualities of a leader. Isolated in Moesia, reduced to the command of too small a force, he had grown inoffensive. His rivals had found it easy to send him into this hardly disguised exile because, in this weak and vicious court, in this empire in decay, men were the more dreaded the more apparent were their virtues. The Goth's name was Alaric.

This, thought Rufinus, was the man he needed. His

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military talents made him Stilicho's equal, and the disfavor shown him would no doubt dispose him to consider a proposal. It would be enough to stress the disdain with which he had hitherto been treated when so many cowards and fools were overwhelmed with honors, to insinuate that Stilicho was the author of his disgrace, and to feed his desire for revenge, to goad his natural ambition in order to secure his consent.

These Barbarians, heads of clans, leaders of hordes, or petty kings, were all adventurers, eager to serve the man who could pay for their services. Alaric was still very young, not yet thirty. A province or some pounds of gold would pay for his assistance, and then he would be sent back to the frontier. For if it were expedient to use the Barbarians, it was also important to see that they did not install themselves with their families in the lands of the empire.

Rufinus took pleasure in thinking how disagreeably surprised Stilicho would be when he saw a Barbarian, this Alaric, generalissimo of the armies of the East. To pit a Goth against a Vandal, would not that be the measure best calculated to offend the Regent and menace his power? The empire, naturally, would suffer from such dissension, but who cared about the empire now that the wise and puissant Theodosius was dead?

And while Stilicho felt rise around him the tides of rancor, flattery, jealousy, hatred and servility Rufinus, in his mind's eye, saw a young Teuton officer, ill rewarded for his services, forgotten in a far province, and devoured by impatience and ambition.

Unseen, Alaric the Goth began to play the leading rôle in the drama which was to end with the fall of Rome.



## I: YOUNG ALARIC

**I**N a century of migrations of peoples and of Barbarian invasions, a young Goth's infancy was subject to the capricious laws of the most adventurous and exciting vagabondage. The Gothic tribe paying homage to the Balthung family had not escaped those ethnic cataclysms which during the second half of the fourth century distracted the peoples of eastern Europe. In their history's most distant past the Goths found only nomad wanderings, battles, flights and conquests.

It was said that led by their king Berig, they had many centuries before left the Scandinavian peninsula, and had established themselves beside the Vandals on the Baltic coast. Three ships at that time carried their whole nation. Since one of them always lagged behind, the men who manned it were called *Gepiden*, that is, "the dawdlers."

Filimer, the fifth king in succession to Berig, had conducted them to Lithuania, and then to the banks of the Euxine Pontus. Thence their people, become very numerous, had traversed all eastern Europe, seeking a fertile land in which to settle. Toward the year 370, approximately, the Balthung family, supremely noble since it descended from the god Balder, was living on the island of Peuce, at the Danube's mouth. There was born a child, who was named Alaric and thus was predestined to govern an immense empire, for *Ala-Reiks*, in the Gothic tongue, meant "The Master of All."

The nomad life to which the majority of the German peoples had accustomed themselves, their wagon-train perambulations across eastern Europe, long and meandering — save when the appearance of the cruel Alans or Huns set these wheeled houses to galloping precipitately — were well calculated to enchant the imagination of children, and give them a taste for risk and adventure. Yet these interminable vagabond wanderings that had lulled his earliest infancy were abruptly interrupted, in Alaric's recollection, by a tragic event that determined his fate and directed the young Barbarian's future into unexpected channels.

One morning in the winter of 375, the Roman officers commanding the outposts on the Danube notice a strange agitation among the Goths dwelling on the other side of the river. When the fog lifts, they see the Barbarians running along the river bank, seemingly a prey to the most lively terror. Piteous voices implore aid, and the Romans can hear the cries of women and children, while the rolling of chariot wheels, the laments of the wounded and the neighing of horses are mingled in unutterable disorder.

The centurion in command of the post is alarmed by the tumult. Thinking it heralds a new invasion, he calls his men to arms and prepares to fight, until the desperate appeals of the unfortunates apprise him that they wish to cross the stream. Now the Roman government's great concern was always to keep the Barbarians at a distance, on the far side of the liquid barrier, whether they solicited its alliance or endangered its security. The officer, perplexed, sends out some soldiers in a boat to discover the cause of the tumult. The boat returns bearing the Gothic chiefs, together with an an-

cient named Wulfil, who has converted them to Christianity and even translated the Old and New Testaments into the Barbarian tongue.

They bring alarming news. An Asiatic nation, the Huns, so they say, has come down on eastern Europe, ravaging indiscriminately, and spreading ruin and terror wherever they pass. Having vanquished the Alans, the Suevi and the Vandals, they have advanced to the Danube, and their vanguard threatens the Gothic camp. The Goths, trapped between these yellow horsemen and the river they cannot cross since they have no boats, ask the aid of the Romans or, at least, authorization and means to save themselves under the protection of the Roman ballistas and onagers.

Disquieted by the presence of these Asiatic monsters whose approach Wulfil has announced, the officer refuses to accept the responsibility of receiving the Goths to Roman territory, but promises to advise his government of their request. He sends off a messenger, who reaches the Emperor Valens in Antioch, in the midst of an extremely important church council. For the Emperor pays little heed to the internal and external affairs of his empire, being entirely given over to his one absorbing passion — the cultivation of religious controversy. He has just clamorously announced his conversion to Arianism, and is completely wrapped up in the fervors of the religion he has so recently acquired. When the Gothic envoys are presented to him he refuses to let them enter the empire unless they adopt his own new-found faith. He also demands that the women and children be guarded as hostages and that the men be deprived of their arms. So great is the terror the Huns inspire that the Gothic chiefs accept these conditions,

and the Barbarian people are accordingly allowed to place themselves under the protection of the Roman eagles.

They pay dearly enough for the permission, since no sooner are they disembarked than the Romans fling themselves on them, quarreling as to who shall have the women and children. Hustled about by venders, who feel their muscles and examine their teeth, they are bought, exchanged, disposed of by lot. This last method separates the families. Are they captives or slaves? If they protest, they are soundly beaten and accused of ingratitude. When they ask for food, stale bread and spoiled meat that shrewd traffickers have collected throughout the countryside are sold them at a high price. In exchange for carrion they are despoiled of their jewels and their furs, and when they have nothing left to give they are robbed of their children.

The men gaze in despair at their bows, swords and axes, piled in heaps and guarded by Roman soldiers. Later, exasperated by this ill-treatment, they will try to revolt, they will figuratively beat cart wheels and axletrees into weapons on clandestine forges, and will make the Romans pay well for all their abuse.

In spite of the noble origin of the Balthing tribe, it had not escaped the miseries experienced by the rest of the Goths. Little Alaric, however, was treated not as a hostage but as a guest. He was taught to admire and serve Rome, and while still young he entered the army, for his illustrious birth and his character destined him to a military career. His vigor and frankness, the boldness of his glance, his skill in the use of his weapons — like all youthful Goths he had practised arms almost from birth — saved him from the wretched and shame-

ful fate that awaited other Gothic children in the Roman *ergastula*, the underground slave prisons. When the men of his clan were incorporated in a regiment of auxiliaries, they took him along with them, and as soon as he was able to fight — that is to say, even before his adolescence — he shared their campaigns in Gaul, Amorica and Spain, where incessant uprisings called for repression and chastisement.

The officers, noting his courage and intelligence, saw to it that he rapidly rose from the subordinate grades. When he accompanied Theodosius in his war against Eugenius and Arbogast, he was already commanding a squadron, though no more than twenty years old.

The men of his clan respected and admired his martial bravery. In this hardy, vigorous stripling they revered the true offspring of Balder, the intrepid chief born to command, and to win glory and wealth for his people.

So great was his prestige among the Goths that they would have followed the young captain to the ends of the world. The Romans themselves recognized in him one of those daring and resolute natures destined to greatness. His courage, intelligence and military genius impressed even famous veteran generals. Some already saw in him a new Stilicho.

And the Balthung, aware of his own valor and stimulated by the impetuosity of his budding ambition, told himself that in the times in which he lived swift advancement in rank might lead to supreme command, that an officer of noble birth might aspire to any goal. He was already dreaming of being made a general, or even *magister militum*, head of the army, when his sudden exile to Moesia reminded him that although his



bravery had merited the admiration of Theodosius, it had also aroused the suspicions of those who envied him.

He had distinguished himself too outstandingly. The generals in power could not but resent his growing renown and use every means to relegate to obscurity a military genius whose brilliance disquieted them.

The "soldier workman" represented an old Roman tradition. It allowed the State to remove to some far rural retreat the soldiers whose immediate vicinity caused alarm, and assured the protection of the frontier as well as the clearing of wild forest lands. Yet if the Roman soldier was fond of agriculture and willingly devoted his leisure to bucolic occupations, the same could not be said of the Goths. Sorry farmers, used to long courses in the saddle, to adventurous expeditions, it was against the grain that they resigned themselves to a task which their pride as horsemen unskilled in the use of harrow and plough, had taught them to despise.

The Gothic regiments quartered in Moesia suffered from an inaction that seemed to dishonor them. Weeds flourished in their vegetable gardens, and they turned harvesting into a derisory game, amusing themselves by beheading the ears of corn with the blades of their long swords. And he who suffered most cruelly from the bitterness of a purposeless life and the fetters of a wretched fate was Alaric. After his successes in Theodosius's armies his military career had been suddenly interrupted. The ministry of war at Constantinople, to which he was subject, seemed to have forgotten him completely. While he was happily pushing on toward

the highest military grades his impetus had been arrested. He was left to rot in degrading banishment, in the depths of a province where his men were bored, and where he himself had to endure the most irksome misfortune known to a man of action — that of having nothing to do.

Without ceasing he solicited his appointment to active service, the command of an expedition against the rebels, no matter where, in Gaul, Amorica, Spain or even Africa. His appeals met with no reply, and he kicked his heels in impatient expectation of an order to march that never arrived.

During this time his Goths, who had just proclaimed him king, murmured against him. Did he mean to spend the rest of his life in Moesia? Did he want to turn his warriors into unwarlike peasants? Some of his vassal chiefs informed him of this discontent, and improved the opportunity to air their own grievances. Anxious for the glory of his race and name, they reminded him that the Goths were not accustomed to letting their arms rust, and that if their king meant to restrict their activities to tilling the fields, it would be best to beat their swords into ploughshares without delay.

Alaric was the more enraged and humiliated by these reproaches since he blamed himself for accepting the insulting position into which Byzantine indifference or hostility had forced him. When he looked at the emblem of the Balthing painted on his standard, he clenched his fist in impotent rage. The courage and daring he had displayed in the service of the empire, were they so negligible that he was now disdained? Had he distinguished himself under Theodosius's purple *labarum*, the banner marked with the golden wreath

encircling the sacred monogram of Christ, only to accept an exile usually inflicted on the cowardly and incapable?

His horsemen's complaints seemed the echo of his own anger; their discontent expressed his own indignation. He listened to the reproaches of his Goths, born for battle, and his disappointment and rage fed on their grievances — and they hoped that his Barbarian impatience would in the end get the better of his disciplined docility as a Roman officer.

While the Goths were eating out their hearts in inaction in Moesia, other Barbarians — whence come, none could say — availed themselves of the winter to enter the province. There they mocked the inactivity, and with vagabond independence insulted the immobility, of Alaric's soldiers. As chance would have it, the Danube froze solid for almost its whole length, and its smooth surface supplied such a roadway as was forbidden by Roman vigilance. To gratify their own curiosity, no doubt, horsemen crossed to the other side of the river, first one by one, and then in small squads. Some brought their wives and children with them, and in order not to be separated the remainder of the tribe followed.

What sarcastic raileries did they not have to endure from their nomad visitors, these Goths who had abandoned sword and bow for the spades they used against their will, and very awkwardly at that! When they saw the stranger horsemen trotting across their fields, where weeds were more plentiful than grain, they did not long resist their own desire to ride afield. Unknown to their king, they ventured on some raids that restored their martial ardor and good spirits. They also brought back

loot, plunder that excited the greed of their less enterprising comrades.

These raiding expeditions threatened to disorganize Alaric's army, by weakening the rigorous discipline that was essential if the Barbarians, jealous of their independence and eager for rapine, were to be kept within bounds. The Balthung feared that his soldiers would not content themselves with easy maraudings that distracted their boredom, and that the nation would disintegrate into a number of plundering bands. Would it not be better to make a little demonstration in the outskirts of Constantinople, to satisfy his wayward horsemen?

The best way to recall themselves to the attention of the State was to show to the Byzantine statesmen the fine squadrons condemned by them to idleness.

For a long time Alaric considered the chances that an expedition of the kind might offer. The regiments Constantinople had supplied to the army of Theodosius for his campaign against Eugenius and Arbogast had remained in Italy, withheld by Stilicho. Hence there was no danger that Alaric would be severely punished if the Emperor were irritated because he appeared under arms to seek the answer that had not been forthcoming. At most he would be reprimanded, and sent back to Moesia. It was more likely, however, that alarmed by this demonstration, this time the Emperor would listen to the demands of the Goths.

Rallying his dispersed horsemen, enrolling the nomad Barbarians who hastened to join his regular soldiery, Alaric decided that the moment had come to march to Constantinople. Not that he wished to seize the city; he would merely intimidate the Emperor and his Re-

gent, and by marshalling his forces constrain them to give him the command that they had so persistently refused.

The Goths shouted with joy when called to arms. They polished their swords, lances and axes, rubbed their casques till they shone, and collected all the supplies available. The horses were harnessed to the heavy wagons in which the soldiers' families followed the army, reserve ponies were lassoed in the pastures, and soon Alaric's squadrons, completely equipped, were ready to go.

Officers of the auxiliary or federated troops who should leave their cantonments without authorization were threatened with dire punishment. To march on Constantinople was to run the risk of being declared a rebel and an outlaw, yet with the fine army that passed before him Alaric thought he might defy the feeble Arcadius with impunity. And, no matter how the adventure might end, it could not be more disastrous than the inaction to which he had been condemned. No valor is so great but that it stands in frequent need of attesting itself in some striking way. The Byzantines would be the more eager to recognize his military genius once they had a chance to see at first hand how redoubtably strong he was.

With the officers of his squadrons and the chiefs of the vassal clans accompanying him, Alaric rode up a little hill whence, in the plain below, he could see the crowd of horsemen and of wagons. Trodden under foot by the restless steeds, the fields and gardens the Goths had attempted to cultivate offered a sorry sight. How much fairer was that of these magnificent blond soldiers clad in leather and coiffed with high helmets, bow



across shoulder and lance in hand! Large foraging bags hung from the horses' necks. The tips of the lances mirrored the rays of a cold winter sun.

When at the officers' word of command the men began to march, Alaric drew his sword and saluted the review with a guttural cry. Then rose to the king a tremendous shout that woke a thousandfold echo among the mountains, and made the quivering horses rear. Below him, brandished by a gigantic horseman, floated the ancient standard that his ancestors, King Berig's companions, had brought from the northern lands. On it entwined monsters tore at each other, and above them there floated strange moons, drawn by soothsayers in a magic conjuration promising glory and prosperity.

## II: RUFINUS PLAYS A TRUMP

**W**HEN he learned that the Goths had left their cantonments and were probably marching toward Constantinople, with a display of military strength that revealed disquieting intentions, Rufinus declared there was no one to whom he could entrust the defence of the empire. He himself must march to meet the redoubtable Barbarian. His friends tried to dissuade him, less because they were worried about his fate than because of his notorious incompetency in military matters. But the Gascon would not listen to them. He donned a magnificent general's uniform, put on a purple mantle and a casque with crimson plumes, and mounted his horse, after bidding the Emperor a solemn farewell.

Despite the fear that the approach of the Barbarians inspired, the Byzantines greeted the comic figure of the improvised warrior with bursts of laughter. While some made a show of tearful recognition of his new rank, imploring the Regent not to spare a single Goth, others shouted the most insulting pleasantries at the chieftain, and at his staff in which figured eunuchs adorned with military trappings.

Knowing that Rufinus, as a rule, was not fond of running risks, every one wondered what was at the bottom of this unexpected act of heroism.

Since the day when, at the death-bed of Theodosius, the idea of inducing Alaric to oppose Stilicho had occurred to him, during his preoccupation with palace in-

trigues on his return to Constantinople Rufinus had forgotten the Gothic chief and the rôle he might be able to assign him in his combinations. Alaric's taking the field having abruptly recalled the Goth to mind, the minister determined to lead the army of the East in person, and to take advantage of the chance to negotiate directly with the Barbarian king, far from indiscreet ears. His audacious course had no other object, for he had decided never to come to blows with such a dangerous adversary. He knew what Alaric wanted: advancement, a more important command, a province to govern — in short, what all the auxiliary and federated chieftains desired. Nothing was easier than to accord him all these things, provided that, for Alaric's part, he showed some willingness to further Rufinus's projects. That is why, preceding the march of the army by a few hours, a messenger riding at full speed was bringing to the king of the Goths a most courteous letter, inviting him to negotiate.

Alaric congratulated himself on the success of his audacity. The regions the Goths had ravaged in their passage had yielded considerable booty. Herds of cattle and sheep, lashed by whips, pricked on by lances, deafened the rear guard with their bellowing and bleating. The inhabitants had offered the Barbarians just enough resistance to afford them the pleasures of battle without really hindering their march. Finally, their king had promised them that now, having left Moesia, they would not soon arrest their course.

The Goth sent back the messenger, saying he would enjoy the interview suggested, and gave the command to camp not far from the Roman army, which also aligned its tents and lighted its bivouac fires.



Gothic Idols (From a bas-relief of the "Storied Column")





The numbers and power of the Goths so intimidated Rufinus's staff that his officers tried to compel him to enter into negotiations that he had already secretly begun. They begged him to save the empire, and when he left his camp early one morning, alone, to visit Alaric, the whole army acclaimed him as "the benefactor of the people" and "the savior of the empire."

Alaric awaited the Regent midway between the Roman tents and the Barbarian chariots. He wore the uniform of an auxiliary officer, together with the insignia of the rank he had won in the campaign against Eugenius. Sitting astride a fine charger he no sooner saw Rufinus approaching than he dismounted with much deference, and helped the minister out of the saddle.

Rufinus had left his escort at a distance that prevented him from being overheard, and with a gesture he asked the Goth to dismiss his own accompanying horsemen. At a sign from their chief they sped off at a gallop, and Alaric said: "In any event, they do not understand Latin! "

Two camp chairs had been placed fronting each other. The leaders seated themselves, regarded each other for a few moments, and then Rufinus spoke. Alaric listened to him attentively without allowing his face to show the slightest feeling. In an easy, familiar manner the Regent declared that he had always taken a great deal of interest in the young Gothic officers, but he wished to show his special good will toward the Balthung, whose noble origin and military worth he esteemed. He would soon, he continued, give him an opportunity to show his courage and all his ability. Then he spoke in so low a

voice that the two escorts would have had to be much nearer than they were to have caught a single word.

Their conversation over, they rose at the same moment, saluted each other amiably, and remounted their steeds.

When he had rejoined his staff — well-nigh distracted by anxiety — Rufinus wore the heroic mien of an exhausted man who has undergone a terrific struggle. He murmured in an exhausted voice — for he was a good comedian — and with a gesture that expressed his gratitude to heaven he declared that the empire, God be praised, had escaped the most awful dangers! Then, in broken phrases, he described an irreducible adversary sworn not to leave one stone in Constantinople on the other. Fortunately he, Rufinus, using menace and supplications in turn, had arrested the threatening arm raised to destroy the empire. In short, he had ordered Alaric to retire. And as at that very moment an officer arrived to report that the Goths were breaking camp, Rufinus was lauded for the splendid success of his intervention.

The victorious negotiator was not asked whether Alaric's troops would return to Moesia. It was enough to see them remove themselves from Constantinople.

While triumphal arches were hastily raised against Rufinus's return, the Balthung had resumed his march. What marvelous conquests would he not make now! Rufinus had given him Illyricum, had engaged himself to have all he might do approved by imperial authority, and had promised him the title of *magister militum*. In addition, he had given him to understand that the entry of so powerful a Barbarian army into a province that rightfully belonged to Constantinople, according to the

terms of Theodosius's will — and that Rome showed herself ill disposed to surrender — would undoubtedly cause Stilicho to intervene.

The young chieftain was radiant with joyous enthusiasm as he led his soldiers toward Macedonia: Rufinus had given him all he wanted — the pretext for a triumphant cavalry raid, the promise of supreme military command, and a chance to measure himself with Stilicho.

Even more than the other material and moral advantages, the last point of this agreement intoxicated the King of the Goths with pleasure and pride. His new charge would make him the Vandal's equal, and would bring on a glorious duel between them.

An ancient enmity existed between Alaric and Stilicho: both were Germans, both exercised the same profession, and both were equally ambitious. The main difference was that Stilicho had already "arrived," while Alaric, the petty king of only a portion of the Gothic people, hitherto had been obliged to kick his heels in disgrace, exile and inaction.

In those days there was not a Barbarian horseman who did not think that he was destined to reign over the Roman empire. Were not all offices of state given to aliens and, in particular, to the most audacious and least scrupulous, to those who knew how to get and to hold? Could one have discovered many genuine Romans in the army or the administration? From the last eunuch in the palace to the generalissimo and the ministers, nearly all the posts were occupied by Barbarians, many of whom could not speak Latin and who even pretended to despise it. What Briton or Alan did not aspire to become the master of this land whose citizens blindly

abandoned it to strangers? Compared to the native legions, how numerous were the squadrons of men with yellow hair, tawny faces, and red, bristling beards! How numerous were Negroes and Asiatics! And the legions themselves, did they not often have to obey orders shouted at them with a strange accent by Germans, Spaniards or Africans?

If such an ambition pricked the avidity of these brutal horsemen, how bold and magnificent must not have been the dream it inspired in a man of Alaric's sort? Everything predestined him to command: the noble blood of his family, equal and rival of that of the Amali, a family that had given the Goths kings never to be forgotten, whose exploits the bards had sung from the days of the distant past. Wherever the Balthungs went they became chiefs. In Pannonia they established a dynasty of kings, in Naples they were destined to become princes, in the Provence they founded the great family of Baux. A Balthung was born to command. In raising Alaric on the buckler, the Goths merely endorsed the traditions of their ancestors. They meant to indicate thereby that this Balthung would add a few chapters to the epic chanted by the scalds on the nights of wassail. They recalled to Alaric his destiny, and their own impatient confidence and appetite for adventure.

The young chief did not need their exhortations and encouragement. His ambition was on the alert. But while his ancestors had been satisfied to rule the Goths, he was animated by a vaster hope and a more exigent desire. In the turmoil of a Europe shaken by invasions and migrations, the Roman empire, tottering though it might be, remained the one stable, organized state. It might be swept by many a Barbarian flood, yet in the

midst of the general anarchy it retained the majesty of a monument, and its marbles, lashed by the sand storms of invasion, continued to perpetuate in their inscriptions and their bas-reliefs the imperishable glory of Rome.

Alaric realized that all conquest is precarious unless accepted by the conquered. It might be easy for him to destroy the Roman empire. But it would be harder for him to master the Roman empire without destroying it, to tame and dominate it, to succeed the Caesars and place an undiminished crown on his own brow, and drape himself in the traditional purple amid the acclamations of the people and the Senate. For at that epoch the following paradoxical reversal had taken place: while the spirit of ancient Rome had vanished from among the Latins, that spirit still lived in the imagination of the Barbarians and fascinated them. The Roman people took no interest in their own history, and had forgotten the very name of Cato, but a Silingian, Panonian or Gothic horseman, exalted by all this glory, revered its traditions and constituted himself the recreative genius of the old Republic. For the empire had not alone resigned to the Barbarians the high and low offices of state, it had even abandoned to them its memories of the ancients, its pride in its past, and its faith in its destiny.

Historians, at a later date, were to ask why Rome, like Carthage before her, was not destroyed by the invasions that succeeded each other during the fifth century. It was because her conquerors did not wish to destroy but to *possess* her. When, in their rage, rancor, jealousy or impotence they ravaged her, their gesture had the strange and pathetic significance of a crime of passion.



Alaric wore a fur waistcoat, dyed red. This, with the Germanic trews, was the uniform of an officer in the army of the auxiliaries. His head was shaven, for if the rank and file were allowed to keep the unruly Barbarian fleece, it was forbidden their officers.

This composite garb, this young, undeveloped figure, lacking the German's long hair and drooping mustaches, exactly expressed the mentality of those allies of the empire. And the Roman ideal, in their case, was similarly mingled with their own ethnic characteristics. The Gothic chief would allow no one to call him by his name of Ala-Reiks, but insisted on being called Alaricus. A Roman officer, he aspired to differ in no wise, at any rate so far as appearance went, from other officers. He took pleasure in recalling the famous dates of Roman history, and in mentioning the great deeds of the emperors and generals of the republic. Seeing and hearing him, one could not have told him apart from Barbarians Romanized for several generations and eager to resemble the Romans of old in every detail. His fidelity and devotion to the Emperor was sincere, fervent and impassioned. He knew that he belonged to the empire and was proud of it.

He spoke Latin with entire correctness and even with a certain affectation of impeccability, astonishing in this young German with his clear skin and his blue eyes. If he composed no Latin verses, like Thrasamund, king of the Vandals, he was nevertheless widely cultured. He had learned Greek, and greatly admired the poets and philosophers. The forced leisure of his Moesian exile had given him plenty of time for reading. He knew the Latin classics, and enjoyed the historians in particular. He strictly observed the tenets of the Christian faith as

they had been taught him by the followers of Arius. He did not regret the wooden idols that, aforesaid, his ancestors and he himself in his infancy had adored, and that the Goths had been compelled to burn before entering the empire.

To a greater extent than the other Barbarian chiefs Alaric had undergone the fascination that the words *the Roman Empire* exercised on all the auxiliaries who served it. Who knows whether he did not dream of restoring to this decaying empire all its pristine power and majesty? Relegated to Moesia, removed from the business of life at Rome and Constantinople, he nostalgically chewed the cud of an ambition without a goal. Now, however, he was to play an important part in the relations between the Empire of the East and the Empire of the West. To invade Illyricum was to draw nearer to Rome, to call attention to a military worth that had been disdained, to furnish his soldiers an opportunity for joyous and fruitful adventure. It would provoke Stilicho, and challenge this admired and detested rival to combat.

Stilicho's friends were gathered that day in the Regent's palace to listen to a new work that Claudian, the favorite court poet, was to read them. Claudian was an Egyptian — he had been born in Alexandria — but so great was his talent that he was compared to Virgil and Horace. Come to Rome but a short time before, his oriental astuteness had realized the essentials necessary for success, and since he excelled in laudation as well as in invective, he had soon become a much courted man. He had attached himself to Stilicho's fortunes: in panegyrics excessive to the point of indiscretion he had so highly exalted his protector that the latter had ap-

pointed him a tribune of the fifth cohort of the Palatine guards — in spite of his entire ignorance of matters military — and special secretary to the Emperor, in order always to have a man devoted to him near the feeble Honorius.

What was this poem that Stilicho had invited them to hear? Claudian had the modest and mysterious air of a man who has a surprise in store, but the malignant expression of his features showed that his poem was no eulogy. An invective? And directed against whom?

The poet read. He invoked the ire of the Furies at the sight of the peace and prosperity reigning throughout the empire. Was it possible that they would docilely resign themselves to the happiness the Romans enjoyed? No. "The implacable Alecto felt the biting shafts of jealousy. She convoked to her black abode the hideous troop of her infernal sisters, and there assembled the innumerable throng of the monsters of Erebus, fateful first progenitor of Night — Discord, nourisher of war, imperious Famine, Old Age, neighbor of Death, Sickness, insupportable even to herself, Jealousy, tormented by the sight of others' happiness, Grief, in tears and covered with a tattered veil, Fear, and blind Audacity, carried away by her daring, Wealth, with her destructive luxury, followed with timid step by wretched Indigence, her inseparable companion, and then the long swarm of Cares, enemies of repose, who nestle against the breast of their mother Avarice."

His auditors, moved by the nobility of his strophes, the ingenuity of his images, listened as the poet described the infernal council. Who was the enemy whom the Furies would unloose on earth; in other words, who

was to be the satirist's latest victim? Hadrian? Leo? No, the gods of evil were not assembled in congress to act against such paltry individuals. Ah, now Alecto speaks:

"If we wish to desolate the world and involve the nations in a common destruction, I have a prodigy of cruelty, more redoubtable than all hydras; more impetuous than the tigress guarding her young; more violent than the raging south winds, more perfidious than the tide battling against them. . . ."

Impatiently they awaited the name, some of the audience, seeing Stilicho smile, already guessed it. And when Claudian with a spacious gesture cried out: "Rufinus, in a word!" it was greeted with a long murmur of pleasure and approval. Heads inclined toward the minister, and the poet's art, the exactness of his portrait, were praised in low tones, for in Claudian's voice Alecto continues: "I was his teacher in the arts of injury and deceit, I taught him to feign good faith, to dissimulate his sinister projects, and to plot treason with smiling lips. Drunken with cruelty, eaten up by love of gain, he is skillful in sowing hatred among the most intimate friends. . . . I admit that Rufinus outdoes me, his promptness in evil-doing has outdistanced my teachings; and, in brief, to sum it up in a single phrase, all that we possess collectively in the way of criminal propensities, Rufinus unites in himself alone."

Stilicho smiles, yet he knows that this man whom Claudian has pictured in such sinister colors, is indeed a redoubtable adversary. He has just learned that Alaric has left his cantonments at the head of a powerful army, he knows the hand and the will that are directing him, and while the poet is unfolding his pompous

images the commanders of the legions are already on the alert. For the expedition of the Goths can only be one authorized by Constantinople, unless it be a brief looting campaign, ending with their return to their cantonments. On the other hand, it may also be the prologue to a long war.



### III: THESSALY'S PROPHETIC TREES

**A**FTER a triumphant gallop across Illyricum, during which the Goths forgot their long inaction and gratified their love of pillage, Alaric established his camp in Thessaly. He does not occupy the country as an enemy, but as a Roman officer. Has he been sent there in the course of service? Who would dare ask him?

Though the inhabitants make much ado about the exactions of which they claim they are the victims, the Balthung lets his soldiers live as they please; that is, he tolerates the inevitable excesses of these militant Barbarians among whom Huns, Sarmatians and Alans are mingled with the Goths. Lacking subsistence, what can they do but live on the country? And if at times they are rather brutal in levying their requisitions, is there any army in the field, Roman or Barbarian, that would differ from them?

Free to plunder at their own sweet will, to tumble the women and strip the farms, the Goths have regained their good humor and martial spirit. In principle, they have been forbidden to molest the inhabitants, but since the latter do not allow themselves to be despoiled without resistance, there are plenty of noisy quarrels and occasional broken heads.

Such incidents are inevitable. Alaric listens patiently to the delegations that present the complaints of the towns and villages his horsemen have denuded of food. He takes pleasure in talking Greek to these magistrates,

who are much surprised to find a Barbarian so at home in their language, and who adjure him to have their stolen cattle, their furniture, carried off by mistake, and their daughters — taken by the Goths with their consent or against their will — returned to them.

He listens absent-mindedly to their tales of woe, and makes note of their demands. Of what importance are such paltry matters compared with the grandiose destiny promised him?

A few days before, he had been riding with a small escort through a dense forest of oaks, as somber and silent as the forests of Germany. A native had told him it was a sacred grove, wherein the gods had spoken their oracles before the advent of Christianity had driven away the divinities of tree and stream. He rode on beneath the shadowy vault of branches, past the tremendous boles, depressed, in spite of his courage and audacity, by a kind of religious fear. Like all Germans, he venerated trees, whose silent vitality and majesty impress man with a sense of primordial strength, motionless and self-contained, with a vegetal pulse beat running from the end of each root to the tip of each leaf.

The wind gently stirred the branches of the oaks. When a child, Alaric had liked to listen to the stir of the pine boughs on the island of Peuce, and had imagined long conversations among the trees, an exchange of supernatural secrets, of mysterious legends and oracles.

It was not necessary that this wood be reputed "holy" to fill him with pious veneration, to recall the ancient religion of all forest peoples, inherent in those of his race. Yet to-day the remembrance of the predic-

tions that such trees secretly whispered in their rustling tops, made him wonder with curiosity and a touch of anguish what they might be murmuring. Had they not something to tell him, these vegetal gods to whom the future was unveiled? He listened, while in the silence of the forest was heard only the sound of hoofs trampling the dead leaves, and the swishing of branches. So intense was his attention that it seemed to him he could distinguish the forms of words amid these confused sounds. Aye, he could hear the sonorities of human voices, hardly audible, whispering Latin syllables that took shape as a prophetic phrase: *Penetrabis ad Urbem*.

"Thou wilt penetrate to the city." Which city is meant — if not Rome, the goal of all his desires and all his ambitions?

He drew rein brusquely. The whole forest was now repeating the prophetic secret that he alone understood — *Penetrabis ad Urbem* — and the trees in long quaverings repeated it to one another.

He said nothing of this enigmatic colloquy either to friends or to counsellors, nor to his most intimate companions-at-arms. He kept the secret of the prophecy, and repeated it to himself when, at times, he felt that he was unreasonably ambitious. The gods were giving him Rome in advance: he would know how to support their prediction with all the strength of an energetic spirit, an indomitable courage and a vigorous arm.

And now let Stilicho come, for he would surely hasten up to succor endangered Illyricum, the Greece that was the frontier of Italy, the barrier raised between them and the Barbarian races. Never had a Gothic people been seen camped so near the Latin soil. Hitherto only

regiments of allies or auxiliaries quartered in barracks or camps, and controlled by Roman officers, had been permitted in the vicinity of the frontiers. Never before had they beheld a horde, with women, children, herds and baggage, which was ruled by its own king and in which the regular regiments were lost in a crowd of nomads of every race.

The intruders must be driven off without delay, and sent back to the Danubian lands they never should have left. Stilicho has left Rome, he descends the Rhine to its mouth, and during his voyage makes sure of the fidelity of his Germanic allies; he recalls his American legions, gathers the Gallic tribes, and returns at the head of all the troops available.

He is so speedy that the whole trip from Milan to Leyden and back is over in two weeks, declares Claudian, prompt in lauding his protector's achievements even at the occasional expense of the exact truth.

In his soldier impetuosity and his haste to dispose of a danger threatening the empire, Stilicho had not noticed the trap prepared for him. The presence of the Goths in Greece was merely a bait: he was practically fated to swallow it. While he collected a large army, stripping the frontiers to add to the number of his legions and coming down into Thessaly by way of Venetia and Dalmatia, Rufinus was delighted to see him swallow the hook. The minister had the Emperor Arcadius write his brother, the Emperor of the Occident, a letter in which the ruler complained with hurt surprise at seeing a Roman army invade a province that their father's will had attached to Constantinople. Could it be possible that with Theodosius hardly buried, his wishes were so little regarded? He also re-

proached his brother Honorius in bitter terms for the intemperate zeal displayed by the Western emperor's general Stilicho in causelessly attacking a Roman officer to whom the government of Constantinople had assigned Illyricum as a garrison.

This letter reversed the rôles. With entire verisimilitude it blamed Honorius for everything, and Stilicho, through his intervention, no longer figured as a savior, but almost as a rebel. Together with the letter Honorius transmitted to Stilicho a short message in which he ordered him to return to Italy at once, and informed him that his haste to succor Greece had, in reality, been nothing but a tremendous blunder.

Apprised of the arrival of the Roman army, whose advent his scouts had announced, the Goth evaded battle. He ordered the chariots to be placed in a ring, according to the old tactics of the nomad hordes. The clumsy vehicles with their heavy wooden frames and leather curtains, thus placed in juxtaposition, made an excellent defence. Within their enclosure were placed women, children and horses. The warriors installed themselves in the carts, crouching beneath the axle-trees with their great bows, their arrows tipped with bronze, their javelins and their casting hatchets. At a loss how to break through this rampart, the Roman army stopped, encircled the Gothic camp, and prepared to besiege it as it would a fortress.

For the first time Stilicho and Alaric meet face to face. Separated by the linked chariot-ring of the Goths, and by the siege trenches of the Romans, the two Barbarian generals confront each other. Stilicho sees a formidable future danger for the empire in the Balthung. He realizes that this daring and ambitious chief, worthy



of his family name (for in Gothic Balthung is equivalent to "bold"), will not be satisfied to remain a docile instrument in Rufinus's hands. On the day he wearies of lending himself to the Gascon's maneuvers he will take the field on his own account; and his personal bravery, his ancestral prestige and his own fame, will they not rally around him not a mere horde of adventurers, but all the Goths scattered throughout the immensity of the empire, glad to obey a chieftain of their own race?

A favorable opportunity offers to suppress this ambitious soldier before he becomes a danger to the empire and also his own rival. Stilicho's army is numerically superior to that of the Goths, and will certainly win an easy victory.

For his part Alaric takes no steps to break up his camp. Well protected by his ring of chariots, abundantly supplied with provisions, he has no idea of engaging in an unequal battle with the Romans. Though impatient to measure himself with Stilicho, the numerical inferiority of his army leads him to prefer a pacific solution. Besides, Rufinus has ordered him to avoid coming to blows as long as possible. Meanwhile that minister is intriguing, and Alaric, always sparing of his soldiers' lives, awaits the result of the machinations. And the Vandal also, to save himself the losses incident to an assault, prefers to withhold his attack until the moment when Alaric's troops will be enfeebled by privations. So he prolongs the siege. When at length he judges the time is ripe, he has his battering rams, his rolling towers, his ballistas and catapults brought up, and orders the Goth camp to be stormed on the morrow.

All his soldiers are ranged before the entrenchments,

confident of success, inflamed with martial ardor. Their general is about to give the decisive signal, when a courtier hands him Honorius's letter.

He could have put off breaking its seal, could have carried Alaric's camp by storm and have massacred the Goths, without ever knowing what the contents of the letter might be. But the obedience that constitutes a soldier's strength disarms him, once discipline subjects a great man to the orders of a mediocrity. Stilicho reads the letter at a glance. There is still time to disregard it, to pretend to defer until after the battle the moment when he will be at liberty to acquaint himself with the message, and meanwhile to annihilate Alaric.

His soldiers, surprised to note that the signal to attack is not given, that the battle flags are not raised, watch their general with surprise. Stilicho is very pale, the hand that holds the tablets trembles, and he glances with despairing rage, now at the Goth's camp, and again at his own idle army. For together with the order to evacuate Illyricum on the spot, and to treat Alaric as a loyal and faithful Roman officer, Honorius, at his brother's request, further instructs Stilicho to divide the army, and dispatch the soldiers belonging to the Empire of the East to Constantinople.

The general is deeply grieved at the thought of parting with the regiments that he had had so much trouble in assembling, that he went in search of to the banks of the Rhine, and those American legions who abandoned the Caledonian frontier at the risk of provoking an invasion, the vanquishers of Arbogast and the erstwhile soldiers of Eugenius, now reduced to obedience.

Alaric, meanwhile, regrets that he has overcome with-

out fighting an adversary against whom he was eager to measure himself. At one in thought, both commanders deplore the lost opportunity.

The rôle of the timid beleaguered is worthy neither of the bravery of the Goths, nor of their leader's valor. Stilicho might have been slain during the battle, an event which would have removed a determined rival from Alaric's path. And who knows? After a victory he would immediately have been appointed master of the cavalry, or even *magister militum*, with supreme command of the two arms of the service, a title that carried with it the powers and authority of a generalissimo. Rufinus's policy triumphs because it places Stilicho in the position of a rebel, sends him out of Illyricum and, to all intents and purposes, takes possession of that province and incorporates it in the Empire of the Orient. Yet what will be done for Alaric, in view of this success? How will he be rewarded?

While Stilicho is still dumbfounded by Honorius's order to split up his army, Alaric from his chariot watches the agitation that reigns among the Roman soldiery. Indignant because they are checked at the very moment when they are about to defeat the enemy and divide his possessions, distressed at having to renounce a victory so full of promise, the Romans break out into invectives against the two Emperors.

It is difficult to choose the regiments that are to be taken over by Arcadius. No soldier who has served under Stilicho would be willing to obey the Constantinopolitan generals. At this moment a word would suffice to unloose a military revolt and deliver all power over to the Regent of the Occident. If the latter were no more than a mere ambitious adventurer, he could

seize this opportunity to usurp the throne of the Caesars. The whole army is ready to follow him, and this army is made up of the best troops in the empire. With it Stilicho would have no trouble in possessing himself of Constantinople and of Rome, after having defeated the Goths. He would reëstablish the unity of the empire and, no doubt, would reign with more wisdom than the sons of Theodosius.

Unfortunately, Stilicho is a soldier, not an adventurer. He cannot boast the mercenary's absence of scruples, and the responsibility he has assumed of protecting his master's heirs forbids him to attack or to diminish their authority, even in the best interests of the State. Overwhelmed with humiliation and chagrin, mastering an ardent impulse to rebel, he obeys the Emperor's orders.

Followed by the jeers of the Goths, who cannot resist the pleasure of scoffing at their helpless adversaries, the army of the Occident returns to Italy with Stilicho, and the army of the Orient sets out for Constantinople, under the command of a Goth, Gainas. Theoretically Alaric, the Roman officer, occupies Greece on behalf of Arcadius.

The Thessalians, indifferent to imperial negotiations and the disputes of chancelleries, and anything but pleased to have the Goths remain in their land, whether as enemies or as allies, decide to rid themselves of their dangerous guests. They fly to arms, and when Alaric, rid of his besiegers, breaks camp, they place themselves in ambush at the point where the Barbarians must ford the Peneus, and attack them at the moment when they are in the midst of the crossing.

It is not easy to get the heavy chariots, and the bel-

lowing herds of cattle that throw the squadrons into disorder, across the river ford. While the chariots descend one by one into the water and the horsemen force the cattle to swim the stream the Thessalians, in ambush behind the rocks and hidden by the trees of a dense forest, deluge their enemies with a shower of arrows and stones.

Unarmed, taken by surprise at the moment when they are pushing on their nomad houses, and clinging to their horses' tails as they swim, the Goths, disconcerted by the unexpected attack, make but an awkward defence. Some hasten to gain the opposite bank. Others turn back to repel the aggressors.

Seeing the terrible disorder into which his army has been cast, and that it risks massacre at the hands of its invisible assailants, Alaric, while struggling against the river current that carries away his charger, rallies a few horsemen with voice and gesture, and in spite of a hail of arrows vigorously attacks the mountaineers. With sweeping blows of sword and hatchet he flings himself into the woods where the Thessalians hide. Paying no attention to the arrows that strike resoundingly against his huge buckler, and the stones that break on his casque, erect in his stirrups he lays about him on all sides. He seems one of those gigantic heroes of the past, a character of ancient legend, everywhere in evidence at one and the same moment. While he thus concentrates the fury of the attack on himself, the chariots cross the river, and his horsemen, gathered by their chiefs, make the Balthung's standard their rallying point, counter-attacking with a courage excited by rage and humiliation.

When the Thessalians led by their king, whom they



consider invulnerable, see returning those Goths whom, favored by surprise, they had expected to destroy, they hastily abandon the field of battle, and precipitately regain the mountainous forest ranges whence they cannot be dislodged.

#### IV: "THE PERSIANS" IN ATHENS

**A**LARIC'S audacity and promptness alone had prevented the annihilation of the Gothic army in the battle. The aggressiveness of the Thessalians, however, had resulted in heavy losses. Many were the corpses rolled down by the stream, large the number of the wounded, and more painful even than wounds was the indignity these peasants and mountaineers had visited upon a warlike people.

Eager to avenge themselves and to make the Greeks pay for the underhand attack to which they had been subjected, the Goths implored their leader to let them give their cowardly opponents a salutary lesson.

With great lamentation the funeral rites for the dead were observed, and those whose remains could be found were interred with casque and buckler, arms, horse and hound. More than three thousand bodies, however, had been carried away by the waters, swept along like pebbles, and unburied were dashed to pieces against the rocks or devoured by wolves — with no pious hand to hang round their necks or place in their hands the Cross that accompanies the dead into the world beyond. The bitterness of defeat was mingled with the joy of victory, and funeral hymns drowned the shouts of triumph.

Alaric might have been satisfied with a pacific occupation of Illyricum, asking no more of its inhabitants than the contributions necessary for his soldiers' subsistence, had not the Thessalians' aggression and the defeat it had entailed irritated him as an intentional

provocation. He had no liking for massacres and unprofitable depredation, yet the treacherous ambushade into which his people had fallen called for cruel punishment. He could not oppose reprisal without running the risk of being blamed by the nation that had elected him king. After the boredom, fatigue and privations of a siege, the Goths wanted action. Impatient to avenge the dead of the Peneus and to despoil a land of legendary wealth, the tribal chiefs insisted that Greece be punished. Alaric agreed, and the punitive raid began.

In the intoxication of his victory over Stilicho, it almost slipped Alaric's mind that he was occupying the province on behalf of the Empire of the East, and as a result of the political maneuvers of rival ministers. His desire for conquest at one and the same time gratified and stimulated by the possession of Illyricum, he was formulating new demands. A Balthung never stopped advancing, he put no limit to his ambition, and in spite of his romanticism Alaric remained a Goth with regard to his character and appetites. While serving the Empire, he meant to acquire a means to power, and he cast in his lot with Rome in order the better — thanks to her — to realize his urge to rule.

One can imagine what an avenging plundering expedition carried out by the Goths must have resembled. The swarm of horsemen and chariots swept like a tumultuous tidal wave through an ill defended land with a population unused to war. The warriors were tingling with unsatisfied lusts, exasperated by a desire for vengeance that enhanced their native greed and cruelty. For several years these Goths, Roman soldiers quartered in Moesia, had been forced to repress their nomad pillaging instincts. Allowed to be themselves

again, and to follow their tribal customs, they now once more turned into vagabond Barbarians, who demolished the towns and cities that lay in their way. All who dared try to arrest their progress were severely dealt with. But before setting fire to the houses the Goths carefully despoiled them, heaping up pell-mell in their wagons valuable furniture and kitchen utensils, and reducing the women and children to slavery.

Those among the Barbarians who had secretly blamed their leader for the long and wearisome stay in Moesia now rejoiced to see him on a magnificent charger galloping at the head of the vanguard, a prince of their own race, the descendant of Balder. They hoped he would imitate his ancestors' deeds of prowess and carry them along with him to the conquest of the world.

The youthful fire and boldness of his glance, the enthusiasm that rang in his voice, filled each of his horsemen with new fervor and blind confidence in the young king's might. And he himself, weary of serving as a tool for the shabby scheming of politicians, found that this raid brought with it an intoxicating exaltation, a consciousness of swiftness and strength.

The inhabitants, who fled in disorder when the earth trembled with the distant thunder of wheels that heralded the approach of the Goths, were quickly run down by the horsemen of the van, and swelled the ever increasing train of prisoners. At night pillars of fire marked the location of villages, and the uninterrupted rumbling of wagons and the clatter of galloping steeds rang out with the sinister menace of some huge and diabolic drum.

Greece had no fortified cities capable of stopping the invaders. Long unused to war, forgetful of her ancient

glory, degenerate and fallen to the estate of a mere Roman suburb, she had neither the strength to resist nor the virile ardor of national enthusiasm and martial spirit to cope with the Goths. She contented herself with sending appeals to Rome and Constantinople, while Alaric devastated her fields and burned her towns.

Only one city — Thebes — proud of her ancient fame, boasted ramparts able to arrest the enemy. All her able-bodied men joined the garrison. They got out the obsolete arms and armor of the days of old. They laid hand on the temple trophies and the war relics of the military families. The helmets of hoplites, richly chased greaves, cuirasses adorned with the images of the gods, long hidden away among family heirlooms, again saw the light of day. These anachronistic cohorts took upon themselves the duty of garrisoning the walls and gates, and awaited the advent of the Goths with mingled anguish and defiance.

The Goths passed them by. Indifferent or disdainful, Alaric ignored the Thebans' warlike preparations. The possession of their city meant little to him; it was not worth the time it would have cost to take it. The tumult of his march was echoed by the ancient walls, but the slings were dropped, the bowstrings loosened. In a cloud of dust the Gothic army passed at a gallop. Reassured — and a trifle put out — the Thebans laid down their useless arms with a sigh of regret. Some persuaded themselves that their martial appearance and the intimidating aspect of the city had terrified the Barbarians. The pagans sacrificed in secret to the tutelary divinities, and, once the horde was no more than an imperceptible speck on the horizon, the city resumed the soft and easy tenor of its way.



If the pleasure and profit of the Goths lay in looting Greece, the sole object of the expedition so far as Alaric was concerned was to see Athens. He was attracted by all the historic and literary recollections associated with this name. He cared little for the treasures of Athens. Her real treasures, for him, were Homer, Euripides, Socrates, the sands of the *palaestra*, the wrestling court of the public gymnasium, the tiered benches of seats in the Dionysian theatre, the temple on the Acropolis, the pines of the Academy, the famous seat of Platonic philosophy.

There were also many other sights worth seeing in Greece: curiosities described by all travellers, ancient memorials like the statue of the poetess Telesilla in the Aspis, the citadel of Argos, the venerable olive tree in the *agora*, the market place of Megara, the plane trees near the lighthouse in Achaia, admired by Pausanias, and those that Menelaus, Helen's husband, had planted in Caphysus in Arcadia, before setting out for Troy.

Alaric had read the account of the journey one of his compatriots, the Goth Aethicus Ister, had made a few years before, in which he had so enthusiastically described the Attic and Arcadian countrysides, the stud farms of Thessaly, and the fisheries which supplied the famous "Tyrian" purple dye. Aethicus criticized the character of the Greeks, whom he thought full of crimes, abominations and every kind of immorality and debauchery, but he could not make an end of praising the natural beauties and artistic treasures of their land.

The splendors of Athens, above all, were celebrated throughout the Roman empire, and even in the provinces and the Barbarian world. Illustrious for centuries,

her university still shone with its old renown. The archons, the chief magistrates of Athens, had preserved the ancient monuments in all their pristine splendor, carefully caring for and repairing them. The sophists, sly and talkative, still strode majestically about in the streets and squares with long beards, dark mantles and great staves. And when so many cities had been entirely destroyed during the earthquake of the year 375, Athens alone — thanks to the divine protection of Achilles and Athene — was spared. The goddess's huge statue, sculptured by Phidias, still adorned the temple of the Parthenon; the sanctuary of Niké, goddess of victory, and the Erechtheum, were yet intact; and though the piety of the faithful had forsaken them, they still enjoyed the fervent veneration of artists and scholars. In spite of Theodosius's persecution of Hellenism, and the rival splendors of Constantinople, Athens still remained the almost divine seat of pure intelligence and godlike beauty.

To transform a military campaign into a kind of "passionate pilgrimage" nourished on literature and art, may seem to be somewhat paradoxical. It will seem less strange, however, if we remember that Alaric was a man of culture, at home in the works of the classics.

Their office, unfortunately, compels the leaders of armies ever to drag in their train a multitude of soldiers. Alaric, no doubt, would have preferred the company of poets and philosophers for his Grecian tour, but he could not discard the people whose king he was. Was it necessary, however, to devastate the whole country because of a tourist's whim?

This whim was one that had obsessed the Balthing for several years: the fancy of spending a day in Athens.

But if that city could object to this wish when expressed by an ordinary traveller, it would be unable to refuse to gratify it when entertained by a conqueror. Hence Alaric had to be the master of Greece in order to enter Athens and realize his fantastic project of living for twenty-four hours the life of an Athenian of old.

If we think of those enormous steam hammers that can break a nutshell without crushing the kernel, we will have approximately the proportion existing between the power unloosed on this campaign and the result in view.

Alaric wished to come to Athens as a conqueror, but not as a destroyer. In order, therefore, to prevent the damage and excesses that his army could not have helped commit in Pericles's city, he would have to keep the Goths far enough away from its walls. He halted his troops at the Piraeus, the port town, cut off all communications with the city, collected what supplies he needed, and prepared to besiege it according to the traditional rules of Demetrius Poliorcetes, the "City-Taker."

The notoriety of the atrocities the invaders had committed, the remembrance of recent Gothic invasions, and the devastations of Kniva and Fritigern had terrified the Athenians. Hence when in turn they were threatened by the Balthung chief, they at once opened negotiations. The garrison, even when reinforced by the students and citizens able to bear arms, was insufficient. So great was the fear of the inhabitants that they instructed their statesmen to grant whatever conditions their besieger imposed. Yet their surprise was even greater than their terror had been, when the envoys returned with Alaric's demands.

These included indeed a heavy ransom in gold, silver, articles of value, rich stuffs and rare spices calculated to satisfy his soldiers' greed. But for his own part, indifferent to the attraction of pearls, byssus and pepper, Alaric asked only the right to spend a single day in Athens, and to stroll about the city as he felt inclined.

Never yet had a conqueror proved to be so obliging! So lively was the joy of the Athenians that they delivered the tribute demanded without delay, holding that they were not paying too much to secure the city of Athens in exchange for a few cartloads of metal and some bags of fragrant spices. Besides, they were flattered by the wish the Gothic chief had expressed, and hastened to grant it, assuring him that the whole population would take pains to make his brief stay as pleasant as possible.

And so, after having been assembled as a committee of generals and diplomats for the purposes of war and negotiation, it was a festival committee that devoted its attention to organizing the "Day in Athens" that Alaric desired.

On the morning of the day set for the entry of the Gothic king the archons, clad in their traditional garb, left the city and moved toward the Barbarian camp. They were escorted by flutists and singers. When not far from the wagons, they saw Alaric advancing to meet them, accompanied by a few officers who, like himself, were versed in Greek literature and devoted to antique art. Alaric, dressed like a contemporary of Pericles, saluted the Athenians with a Greek compliment that did not lack a few solecisms. It was a lovely autumn morning. Seeing these white-robed men talking

familiarly of poets and philosophers as they strolled along the road, who would have suspected that this was the Gothic king who had just ravaged Achaia, and the rulers of Athens who had just purchased the safety of their city at the cost of a heavy tribute and an artist's caprice? The citizens who crowded the streets could not believe that this smiling, contemplative man was the monster they had heard about. And so great was the Goth's confidence that he moved along without arms or escort, while not a cry or menace came from the same crowd that, the day before, had cursed the name of Alaric.

The magistrates had prepared a great banquet at the Pyrtaneum, where guests of state were accustomed to dine, and thither Alaric repaired after having visited the shrines on the Acropolis. The dinner over, he listened to singers and musicians. At his request a reader read from Plato's "Timaeus."

In the afternoon the King of the Goths and his hosts went to the theatre, where, again by his request, Aeschylus's "The Persians" was given. Was the Balthung's choice of the drama that commemorated a Greek victory over Barbarians irony, or did he perhaps have a mind to hear the warnings addressed to a presumptuous conqueror delivered by actors?

In the twilight the voices, amplified by the mouthpieces of the masks, resounded with tragic emphasis. Alaric ate a light meal, then sent for readers, and throughout the night the voices of poets and philosophers resounded in the chamber where listened the Balthung, at ease on a couch, chin cupped in hand. The Gothic officers had long since fallen asleep, and even the Athenian magistrates nodded. But Alaric continued





Alaric's Triumph in Athens



to listen to the exploits of Achilles, to Ulysses's meeting with Nausicaa, to the echoes from Zeno's portico, and to the poems of Sappho and Anacreon.

At dawn he rose and awoke his officers. His day in Athens was at an end. He took courteous leave of the archons, mounted his horse and rode off toward the Piraeus.

During his absence his soldiers had grumbled without ceasing. In spite of the value of the ransom distributed among them, they bitterly regretted their inability to sack the city, which would have yielded them so many valuable objects, and given them women said to be strangely beautiful.

Their rancor fed on the whispers circulated through the camp by Greek monks who had taken refuge among the Goths during Theodosius's religious persecutions, and who visited on Catholics and pagans an identical hatred. These hairy, tattered fanatics had hoped that Alaric would deliver to them the temples of Athens, so that they might cast down the shameless images of the gods and goddesses who — in spite of imperial prohibition — perpetuated the abolished cults. His loot-hungry soldiers and sectarian chaplains refused to be reconciled to the idea that the king had spared the city, once it was at his mercy. So great were their clamors upon Alaric's return that he might have thought them in revolt. With coarse laughter they pointed out to one another the white tunic that had replaced the blood-colored vest of fur, and they jeered at the crown of flowers that still adorned their chieftain's head habituated to the heavy steel helmet that was encrusted with golden figurines and garnets. They mistook for silly weakness what was a poet's whim, or merely a day's

halt — in the kingdom of serene thought and lovely form — of a conqueror weary of victory and rapine.

Yet this force whose master he was, this Gothic army that he led and by which he was urged on, Alaric could not hold in subjection save at the price of frequent concessions. Nothing is more precarious than absolute power. The power of a Gothic king, depending on the unanimous assent of the nation, existed only so long as the king was the incarnation and interpreter of the national will. The slightest cleavage between the collective aspirations of the Goths and their chief's personality would have done away with his authority. The Goths already were forgetting that Alaric had allowed them to ravage Arcadia; they thought only of this Athens he had forbidden them to enter.

To content them and restore to its essential firmness the lien attaching a chief of his tribe, Alaric was obliged to promise further pillage. The Goths thereupon enthusiastically acclaimed him, and joyously broke camp in search of new and profitable adventure.

## V: INTRIGUE STALEMATES STILICHO

THE raid across Thessaly and the devastation of Achaia had linked Alaric with the traditions of the great Gothic chiefs of the past, Berig, Kniva, Fritigern.

He now abandoned himself to the hereditary passions of his race. If the man of culture, the *civilized man*, had claimed for his soul's sake a single day of aesthetic delight and spiritual tranquillity, the *Barbarian* took a kind of acerb pleasure, experienced a sort of troubled delight, in the destruction of towns and villages. It was in this unconscious satisfaction he took in battle and furious cavalcades that Alaric, Romanized though he might be, remained a Goth. His duality of character, the impossibility of harmonizing his desire to be a Latin with his Germanic descent, drove him in turn to think himself a bona-fide Roman citizen, and to tolerate a return of his urge for destruction, for the mad cavalry raids, the frenetic combats bequeathed to him by his ancestors.

Carried away by the impetus of his flight, he now cared nothing for the orders of Rufinus. And he learned, incidentally, that swept away by the intrigues of his rival, the eunuch Eutropius, the Regent had fallen — at the very moment when he had persuaded the Emperor to share with him his throne. Obeying Stilicho's secret orders, Gainas, who had led back the army of the Orient to Constantinople, had taken advantage of the solemn



reception of the troops before the Hebdomon Palace to assassinate Arcadius's minister.

The Regent's fall was detrimental to Alaric's projects. What position would his successor take with regard to the question of Illyricum? Would he leave the Goths in Greece, or would he order their return to their Moesian cantonments? Gainas would assuredly resent the presence of the Goths. The forceful blow he had delivered as Eutropius's auxiliary should bring him promotion to some high grade, and that at Alaric's expense. So great was the hatred and jealousy that divided the Barbarian chiefs, and even the various clans of Goths like those of Alaric, Gainas and Sarus, that the new minister's accomplice, Rufinus's assassin, would see to it that a rival as dangerous as the Balthung was relegated to his former obscurity. Stilicho, by favoring Gainas's pretensions, perhaps had no other object than to prevent Alaric's attaining the rank of generalissimus. Hence, while awaiting the course of events, Alaric continued to march across Greece.

To satisfy the looters and fanatics who held a grudge against him for having spared Athens, he abandoned Eleusis to them. In spite of the misfortunes which had overtaken paganism, the temple of Eleusis was a shrine still venerated throughout Greece. Its oracles had fallen silent, pilgrims no longer brought offerings to the sanctuary, yet none had dared to lay hand on the treasures accumulated for centuries in its underground vaults, and even the presence of a few old priests who tended the temple was tolerated. The authorities winked an eye at the timid observances with which the priests celebrated the great mysteries. They had refused to drive out the last hierophant because of his age and his vast knowledge, and allowed him to seek oblivion

in the solitude of the vast, empty fane whence it seemed the gods themselves had departed. Who was this last high priest of the mysteries of Eleusis? Some say he was Nestor, the Neo-Platonist, others that he was a priest of Thespia, in Boetia, a former sacrificer to Mithra, and still others that he was the magian who had initiated the Emperor Julian the Apostate into the mysteries.

Alaric would gladly have saved the temple of Eleusis as he had saved Athens, but this his soldiers would not have allowed. With savage fury the Arian monks rushed into the sanctuary. They beat the venerable high priest and his assistants to death with cudgels, they demolished the statues and defiled the sacred images to the sound of pious curses and the singing of mad canticles. While they raged against the idols the Gothic soldiery, preoccupied with rapine rather than theology, plundered the temple of the objects of value heaped up in it. They soon discovered the secret treasure chambers and flung themselves into them, elbowing each other out of the way and snatching with impatient hands the gifts, humble or magnificent, that the piety of the faithful had consecrated to the gods. Jewels, votive offerings, gold coins and sacred vessels inflated their leather bags, and they unweariedly continued to search for and appropriate treasures as yet unfound.

When Alaric, impatient, ordered the march to be resumed, there were left in the temple only mutilated columns, shapeless fragments of marble, and the corpses of its priests, scattered about the devastated sanctuary. In a corner of the *cella* a flame, set alight by some hand trembling with hatred and rancor, was already crackling sharply.

In high spirits as a result of the sack of Eleusis the

Goths looked forward to other rich spoils: the temples of Nemeus and of Olympia, of Despoena and of the Akakision, thought of which roused the monks to fanatic rage. Yet in order to enter the Peloponnesus Corinth first had to be captured, and Alaric knew this was not easy. Thanks to the strategic disposition of the country, a very small number of men could defend the passes of the Geranein and the Oneian hills, prevent access to the Isthmus and impose respect on a considerable army.

Corinth was commanded by two Byzantine generals, Antiochus and Gerontius. Both of them were mediocre men of war whom Rufinus — through negligence or treachery — had entrusted with the most important commands. Gerontius had shown the measure of his incapacity when he had been unable to prevent the Goths from crossing Thermopylae. The passage of this famous defile had preoccupied Alaric. He knew that a handful of men could hold an army in check in the passes, and so he regarded the tall, rocky cliffs, and the narrow road winding through the mountains that made so handsome a scenic background for the crushing of his squadrons beneath a shower of rocks, with a discontented air.

He himself had ridden in the van to reconnoitre the approach to the " Gate of Greece," and from a distance had seen the sentinels on guard at the entrance to the gorge, and the guardhouse full of soldiers, their lances stacked. There was a cry of alarm, and at once a barricade of trees and rocks barred the way, the legionaries fell to arms behind their walls, and the Goths had to turn about face or uselessly dash themselves against the spiked palisades.

While Alaric was regarding the unconquerable passage with melancholy eye, a Greek monk who accompanied the army grasped his sleeve and whispered into his ear that there was another road. Alaric looked at him doubtfully. He told himself that if the monks in this country were acquainted with detours of strategic importance, it was likely that military officers knew them even better, and that the other road, in all probability, would turn out to be as well guarded as this. Yet in order to overlook no opportunity, he ordered the monk to guide him. The latter took him to the path of the Anopaea, which not only would enable him to cross the mountain without passing through Thermopylae, but also to take in the rear the garrison established at the entrance to the defile.

Gerontius had neglected to guard this pathway. Some Goths noiselessly crept into it on foot, careful not to dislodge a single stone the noise of whose fall might have roused the Roman soldiery. A few moments later they found themselves above the road, well in the rear of the guardhouse. In the twinkling of an eye the sentinels were surprised, the legionaries' bows and lances seized before they could grasp them, and those who ventured to resist cut down.

The Greek monk who had disclosed the secret road was jubilant, for this victory delivered the sanctuaries of paganism, the demoniac dwellings of the false gods, into the hands of his fanatical coreligionists. The sectarianism and incompetence of the Byzantine generals had helped make it easy for the Goths to enter trans-Isthmian Greece.

There are men who know how to profit by the experience of others, and men who can profit by their

own experience. But there are also fools who are incapable of profiting by their former mistakes and unable to avoid a repetition. Gerontius was one of these last. In spite of the surprise of Thermopylae, he allowed the Goths to seize the Oneium, the range of hills on the east, and, forgetting to fortify the Geraneian hills as well, seemed vastly astonished when he saw rise up before him the blond, fur-clad Barbarians bearing the Balthung's standard. Instead of barring the invaders' route in places favorable to infantry, he now abandoned his Isthmian entrenchments, just as he had sacrificed the mountain passes, and was satisfied to shut himself up in the citadel of Corinth, following the example of the inhabitants of the city and of the Megarian fugitives who crowded it.

Perched on his rock he could, at his ease, watch the Goths defile in the plain below, could observe their squadrons and keep tally on their wagon-train. He had disregarded both his military honor and the encouragement of Stilicho, one of whose officers, riding post-haste, had come to inform him a few days before that a Roman army sent to his relief was drawing near, begging him to hold out until the arrival of these reinforcements that would enable him to destroy the Goths.

In order to save the delay that the long route winding around the Adriatic would have imposed, Stilicho, who had taken over the command of the army of relief in person, requisitioned all available vessels, embarked his troops in them, and made for Greece with sail and oar. For it was necessary to scatter the Goths before they entered the Peloponnesus. Corinth, so he thought, could endure a long siege, but it was always necessary



to bear in mind the cowardice or folly of the Byzantine generals. So he ordered all sails spread, and commanded that the zeal of the oarsmen at the galley sweeps be stimulated by flogging with whips weighed with leaden balls.

In spite of all his haste, however, Gerontius arrived too late. When he reached the Lechaëum, the port of Corinth, he saw clouds of smoke in the distance. Corinth, fallen into the hands of the Barbarians, was afire. The strong city, protected by its impregnable citadel, the Acrocorinthus, which might have broken the onset of the invaders and have proved an insurmountable obstacle, had been taken almost without a struggle. The fugitives who told Stilicho this lamentable tale also apprised him of the fall of Tegea, the surrender of Sparta, and the devastation of the valley of the Eurotas down to the Laconian gulf.

Instead of stopping the Goths on the road from Megara to Corinth, covered with thick forests, or at the Isthmian crossing, or at the foot of the citadel rocks, Stilicho was now compelled to pursue them across the open country, on a ground whose adaptability to cavalry maneuvers was necessarily advantageous to the Barbarians. Of what use had been his precipitation in gathering an army and equipping a fleet the more swiftly to arrive, when Gerontius's treason or incapacity had delivered the gateway to the Peloponnesus into the enemy's hand?

To attack the Goths in the valley of the Eurotas would be to carry the battle to them, on a ground all in their favor. The wide spaces where cavalry could deploy freely were only too propitious to them. So Stilicho contented himself with following them at a distance,

awaiting a better chance to begin hostilities, though he himself also had an excellent cavalry force.

The Roman army was as numerous as that of Alaric, and, with the exception of the legions, was composed of much the same elements. Neither of the two was, properly speaking, a national army. The legions alone were metropolitan troops, made up of Italian soldiers. The cavalry, on the contrary, was a grouping of every possible kind of Barbarian. It included Huns, Sarmatians, Numidians, Vandals, Franks, Iberians, Amoricans and Goths.

This dual character gave Stilicho's army one great advantage: if it became needful to fight in level country, his squadrons of auxiliaries could oppose to Alaric tactics similar to the Goth's own. If, on the other hand, it was a question of building palisades, raising ramparts or digging trenches, his infantry could apply to siege work the long experience of the Roman footsoldier.

Unaware of the enemy's approach, Alaric moved toward the Arcadian mountains. He noticed too late that Stilicho's Barbarian auxiliaries had cut off all his egresses, and were pushing him toward the forests. In the midst of thick and gloomy woods, on rocky ground sown with unknown obstacles, the Goths lost their warlike spirit. They needed the vast plains where horsemen can gallop unconstrained, the thunder of their chariot wheels beating up behind them. They did not possess the legionaries' patience and tenacity. A siege enervated and exhausted them. When they abandoned the offensive for the defensive they were beaten in advance.

Once again Stilicho's tactics obliged his opponent to fight on the defensive, so disastrous to the Barbarians. Alaric hesitated between the desire to attack despite the

disadvantage of the battle ground, and the reasoned prudence of the general who spares his men. As a Barbarian he might have dashed against the Romans at the head of his squadrons, taking the risk of letting them be massacred in vain. But Romanized as he was, he had learned the virtues of temporizing and of an expectant policy.

He did not wish to sacrifice his men in an unequal struggle. His army was his sole means of satisfying his ambition, some day, to rule Rome, and so far from his own land he could not secure the reinforcements of which he stood in need. He also realized that Stilicho would not allow the chance to make an end to the Goths escape him. If the opposing general had taken command of the army in person on this occasion, it was in order to bring matters to a definite conclusion.

Although a retreat seemed anything but honorable, and little worthy of the martial traditions of his forbears, Alaric sacrificed his own pride and love of battle to the tactics called for by the circumstances. One cannot constrain circumstances, but one can always, with a little skill, manage to turn them to profitable account. With his wagon-train and squadrons he plunged into the forests, harassed by the auxiliary horsemen of Stilicho and, too prudent to accept the battle offered him, fell back upon the mountain of Pholoe, and there hastily dug himself in. For if military developments should turn out to be unfavorable to him in this position, he could try to gain time by resorting to diplomacy.

Rufinus's death had plunged the government at Constantinople into the confusion that always follows a favorite's fall. Those of the dead man's friends who had been faithful to him were obliged to flee to distant prov-

inces. The others tried to obtain from the present, the favors they had received from the former minister. But Stilicho was the real enemy of Eutropius, as he had been of Rufinus. Hitherto he had seemed to neglect the tutorship of Arcadius, with which Theodosius had charged him. Yet his discretion might suddenly come to an end, and those who knew the Vandal's political power and prestige were not ignorant of the fact that if some day he was really minded to exercise this guardianship, he would become master of Constantinople as he was of Rome.

Whenever the Regent of the Occident left his capital, whether for a military expedition or merely to inspect the frontiers, the Byzantine politicians followed his movements from afar with uneasy curiosity. No matter what route he followed it always seemed one likely to bring their formidable rival to Constantinople. His entry into war with Alaric might be no more than a pretext to draw nearer the East. The court of Byzantium, therefore, was quite as much interested in arresting the Vandal's victorious progress as was Alaric himself.

Eutropius took advantage of the complaints made by the Greek envoys to suggest to the Emperor Arcadius that it would be well if hostilities ceased. In their pursuit of each other across the Peloponnesus Alaric and Stilicho had not shown the countryside much mercy. If the Goths tried to establish themselves in a city the Romans promptly burned it, lest their enemies make it a place of refuge. Alaric in turn burned the forests in which his adversary was trying to shut him up, and Stilicho destroyed the crops which would have allowed the Goths to revictual themselves. Equally the victims of their enemy and of their deliverer, the Greeks raised a lamentable outcry and appealed to Constantinople,

insisting that if they continued to be protected in this way there soon would be nothing left to protect.

Alaric, entrenched on the Pholœan mount, also sent envoys to Byzantium and awaited their return. And his stratagems were once more to let him vanquish Stilicho without combat. All he needed to do was to wait until the politicians in Constantinople finished their machinations. So he exhorted his Goths to patience, held in check their martial ardor and — showing them the powerful Roman army — promised they should not lack for food or drink. The horses were well provided with forage, and the cattle he had seized in Greece would provide them with fresh meat for a long time. He himself accepted the delay as a condition essential to success. He could not gain the advantage he desired save by docile obedience to the orders that came from Constantinople, and by concealing his wish to be a conqueror. Since the power was in the politicians' hands, he himself would have to be a politician and avoid making any compromising move. Wearisome though the siege to which he was subjected might be, he nevertheless resigned himself to it, in order to give the government at Constantinople time to act.

According to the old Barbarian custom, the chariots had been arranged in a circle, and a large moat had been drawn around them. In ambush behind their wagons, hung with hides and shields, the Gothic archers stood on guard within their strange ramparts. The Romans, for their part, raised embankments, scattered spikes in their trenches and put up watch towers. In their camp, where the cloth tents were impeccably aligned in long rows, the siege life that leaves the soldier with so much idle time on his hands began.

During the first days the officers held down the



soldiers to rigorous service duties. Frequent drills prevented idling and loitering. The legions maneuvered for hours at a time, the auxiliary squadrons carried out sham battles. But boredom soon weakened the zeal of officers and men. Beside the camp a temporary city established by Greek refugees grew larger day by day. In spite of severe prohibitions the soldiers made their way to this town, where they found wine, music and pretty girls. The officers, too, went there, at first out of curiosity, and then from force of habit. At night, distinction between camp and refugee town was almost lost, and little by little discipline disappeared in the Roman army.

Alaric profited by these nocturnal pleasurings, to which even the sentinels abandoned themselves, to bring into his camp what victuals he needed. Thinking to reduce him by thirst, Stilicho had had a river that formerly traversed the circle where the chariots were parked turned out of its bed; and now the Goths carried their leather buckets to the springs a few yards distant from the Roman camp. The orgy was so noisy in its song and tumult that they could even have watered their horses without the Romans noticing it.

Thus they suffered not at all from hunger and thirst, and the Balthung had no difficulty in sending his couriers to Constantinople, and in receiving the messages of Arcadius in return.

Rufinus was dead, but his astute policies still directed the Byzantine court, careful to diminish the influence of Stilicho. What did Alaric want? Did he wish to become master of the empire? Oh no, not at all! His pretensions were far more modest. He asked only to be made governor-general of Eastern Illyria. Was it possible to

refuse so reasonable a request, which, if granted, would secure the tranquillity of an unhappy Greece ravaged by Stilicho? Some insinuated that a Barbarian is always a Barbarian, and that for all he may be a minister, a Vandal remains a pillager and a destroyer. Had not Stilicho made this war a pretext to seize by force that province of Illyricum left to Arcadius by Theodosius's will? Which would be harder to expel from the province, Alaric — or Stilicho?

Once more Arcadius complained to his brother that his allied troops were always molested by the latter's general, and insisted on the evacuation of Illyricum. In the Vandal's absence there was no one at the Roman court to advise the Emperor who, still a child, was at the mercy of every palace intriguer. Stilicho's enemies rejoiced at the opportunity of giving their rival another setback, and had Honorius write a letter in which he left it to his brother to discuss the terms of peace with Alaric; that is to say, the price of his own general's evacuation of Greece.

One day Stilicho was surprised to see various Byzantine diplomats, the bearers of plenary powers, arrive in his camp, install themselves in his tent, and invite the King of the Goths to discuss the terms of his surrender with them. Alaric, appreciating the irony of events, listened to the ambassadors' proposals: he was to be accorded the rank he demanded, that of *magister militum* of the Orient, and he was to enjoy the government of Eastern Illyria, and possession of Epirus, as far as Byrrachion, including the provinces of Molossus and Thesprotes. He also secured the right to take from Roman arsenals whatever arms and equipment he might need.

This right was one the *magister militum* possessed as it was, but Alaric made a point of having it specified in the treaty, so that no objection could be made when he exercised it. He had taken the first step on the road of his ambition. His exile in Moesia and his days of shameful obscurity were over. He had been given a fertile province wherein his Goths could establish themselves, and where there would be room for the other Barbarians he would call in from beyond the Danube. A rich and splendid domicile was fixed for his nomad royalty. The chief of the Barbarian clan was the imperial generalissimus.

On hearing the conditions that turned this peace into a Gothic victory, Stilicho abruptly left the tent. No one restrained him. He had not been consulted, and his presence was unnecessary for the signing of the agreement.

In spite of his military setbacks Alaric had won the game. He had officially become the master of Greece, with the consent of both Emperors. He was a Roman general, and he could arm his Barbarians at the expense of his enemies of yesterday. He triumphed, and yet, at the bottom of his heart, he despised the Byzantine diplomats who had so quickly yielded to all his wishes, and he admired and sympathized with Stilicho, constrained to obey the caprices of such stupid masters.

This first success was to be only a point of departure for the Balthung: his was no ambition to be satisfied with the governance of a province. He regarded the title given him as no more than a single rung of his ladder of ascent, a means that would permit him to realize his more ambitious projects.

## VI: ARMS MAKE THE MAN

**N**O sooner had the Roman army gone than the King of the Goths in his turn gave the order to depart. The wagons loaded with the spoils of Greece got under way, the horsemen fell to singing the old songs telling the glories of the warriors of ancient days, and the whole Barbarian people moved on joyously toward the province assigned to them. The preceding evening Alaric had gathered the tribal chieftains in his tent, and with an air half triumphant, half bantering, had explained to them the result of his negotiation. The humor of it all was stupefying. When he described Arcadius stopping the arm of Stilicho at the moment when he was about to deal them a body blow, and sending the Vandal general back to Rome like a naughty, quarrelsome little boy, there was an outburst of laughter.

They beat the table with their fists, they tugged at their long mustachios. These crippled old horsemen shook with a tremendous fit of hilarity, winking under their white eyelashes, and their laughter was so boisterous that it overflowed their leader's tent, invaded the camp and rolled to the very wagons where the women and children, eyes wide open with surprise, laughed too, without knowing why.

On the eve of victory the Romans had made peace. On what conditions? In reality, Alaric was beaten, and they offered him all he wanted. Did he want a province?

They gave it to him! The rank of general? They begged him to accept it!

The entire Gothic people broke out into a resounding clamor of joy when its King, from the threshold of his tent shouted the order repeated by the chiefs: "Fling away your old weapons! Do not keep a single split arrow or rusted sword! In the future the Romans will supply us with arms. Make cradles for your babies out of the flexible wood of your bows, and use your lance butts for firewood. The arsenals of the empire are full, and we have only to draw on them." Greeted with a cry of enthusiasm, he added: "Rome shall at least have the consolation of dying by a sword she herself has forged!"

The entrance of the Goths into the province awarded them dumbfounded the inhabitants. This was no longer the hairy horde they had watched pass a few months before, but a well disciplined army, marching by in impeccable formation, the horsemen ranged by clans and in squadrons. Instead of ragged tunics and haphazard weapons there was to be seen nothing but sparkling armor, plumed helmets, new lances, shining swords. Quivers overflowed with arrows, and every soldier carried enough darts, daggers, slugs and bows to outfit several men.

The imperial arsenals had provided this equipment. The arsenal heads had at first objected to Alaric's requisitions, but he had soon overcome their objections. Like every other Roman general he had a right to draw the arms he needed from the army magazines. Now he was a Roman general, and the storehouses opened their gates. After he had taken the last arrowhead from the



arsenals on his line of march, he drew on those of Thessalonica, of Naissus, of Ratiaria and of Margus itself, and did not leave a single slinger's stone in them. And since he insisted that he was still not fully equipped, the imperial arsenals worked night and day making arms for the Goths.

His first act as Governor of Epirus was to send all able-bodied men, and even boys, to the army, where they pumped the bellows, toiled at the forge and burned charcoal. Woe to idlers! The Gothic overseers were quick to use the whip on the workman who stopped long enough to wipe his brow. Alaric occasionally visited the workshops in person, and encouraged those who weakened with an ironic comment.

With all the arms he had taken from the magazines and those every day delivered by the arsenals, the Balthing could have equipped an army four times as numerous as his own. To what end, then, did he compel the factories to overproduce? It was wise to lay in a change of arms, but did he need so great a quantity?

In that age, when a man's life often depended on the suppleness of his bow and the temper of his blade, the quality of a weapon was of vast importance. On many occasions the Romans only checked the Barbarians' irresistible onslaught because the latter were armed with crude hatchets and ill-forged swords that quickly dulled. A legion equipped with helmets and corselets could impose respect on several squadrons of naked, fur-clad Germans. Certain Sarmatian tribes still used bronze and even stone hatchets, and the Alans tipped their arrows with bone. These primitive arms at once deteriorated when they came in contact with iron corselets, and had to be changed frequently. Now Alaric

knew that he would need these Barbarians, that some day he might be called upon to consolidate all the scattered, independent Gothic clans, weakened by dispersion and tribal feuds, under one banner, that of the Balthungs, and he wished to be prepared, when that day came, to equip this army in the Roman style, and give it the same swords and shields as those used by the legionaries.

The emptying of the magazines and arsenals, in which the average man saw nothing but waste or clumsy provocation, was in reality carried out in obedience to a prudent plan. If he could not otherwise obtain what he wanted from Rome, Alaric would not balk at using menace and intimidation; he would not hesitate to terrorize her by leading a Barbarian invasion against her. But if the maneuver was to succeed, these Barbarians must be able to fight on an equal footing with their enemies as regards weapons. These weapons he was compelling the empire to deliver to him in advance.

The Greeks were at first terrified at finding themselves handed over to the Goths. To what odious tyranny would not these men subject them? For if they recalled the "Day in Athens," Alaric's unique example of mildness, they compared with it the devastation of Thessaly, the Peloponnesus and Achaia. Alaric's rule, however, though neither weak nor gentle, was no more rigorous than that of the Romans who had succeeded each other in the province. The imperial governors, aware of the precarious nature of their incumbency, thought only of drawing the greatest possible profit out of the land in the shortest space of time. The King of the Goths seemed more attracted by arms than by treasure. Order once more reigned in Epirus, and since the

Balthung's soldiery had exchanged their fantastic dress for corselets and tunics "in Roman style," it was soon possible to believe that no transformation had occurred. So many garrisons had been replaced by others in that wretched land! It had seen Alans, Vandals, Numidians and even Huns. Compared with these savages the Goths made a proper enough appearance, and provided there was no lack of meat and wine for them, and of forage for their horses, they did not molest the inhabitants. It was to Alaric's advantage to live on good terms with his subjects.

And if one did not subject them to a discipline too rigid for their instincts, the Goths conducted themselves in a manner reasonable enough. There was nothing repulsive about them, and certain Greek and Roman writers praised their domestic virtues. The contrast between the simplicity of their morals and the vice and debauchery of the Latins was one of the stock comparisons of moralists. While the latter exhausted themselves in orgies, the Germans were congratulated for being good fathers and husbands. The Roman governors occasioned all sorts of scandals in the provinces confided to their care. Not a virgin was safe from their attacks, and they maintained a whole crowd of kept women and concubines.

Alaric, for his part, lived peaceably with his wife and children, with no more than two or three prisoners to groom his horses and clean his tent. He was not surrounded by the shameful cohort of eunuchs, the useless and wasteful crowd of servants, who encumbered the Roman palaces.

The contrast between the simplicity of the Goths and the decadent refinement of the Latins was so great that

once when the latter, under the yearly compulsion of following the dictates of fashion, wished to adopt the Gothic costume, they indulged in a perfect orgy of imitation. It was necessary to pass a law to put an end to this ridiculous masquerade, in which aged senators as well as youthful men about town let their beards grow, and went about in multicolored trousers and huge fur mantles.

After having dreaded the extremes of exaction the Greeks found their new masters were no less supportable than the old; and when Alaric — having accumulated all the arms he wished to have — no longer constrained them to forced labor at the smithies, they grew used to seeing in their midst, peaceable and good-natured despite their terrible moustachios and their ogreish laughter, the very Goths whom their fathers, witnesses of the invasions of Kniva and Fritigern, had painted in such revolting colors.

The Thessalians chastised for their aggression, and all Greece submissive to his orders, Alaric had no further reason for oppressing the country. Since he wished to turn Epirus into a supply base and mustering place for reinforcements for his future expeditions, it would be poor policy to draw to himself the attention of Rome and Constantinople by silly plundering. His enemy Stilicho would be only too glad to find some pretext to dislodge him and send him beyond the Danube.

*Magister militum* and provincial governor, he must in future conduct himself like a wise administrator and good magistrate. He ruled Epirus as some prefect or proconsul of the old empire would have done, giving audience to plaintiffs, and reasonably adapting his requisitions to the resources of the land.

It was clear that he could not prevent nomad Bar-

barians, deserters from the army of Gainas and survivors of Tribigildus's horde, recently beaten by the Romans, from peaceably installing themselves near their compatriots established in Greece. It would disturb Stilicho were he to learn that the enemies of the empire were sheltering themselves under Alaric's banner and that the auxiliaries, irritated by the provocations of the anti-Barbarian league, were deserting to join them. But the Balthung so discreetly avoided intervention in the empire's affairs, that one could only praise his silence and submission. During the excitement caused among the federated troops by Gainas's and Tribigildus's revolts — for the auxiliaries were torn between loyalty to the empire and natural sympathy for their compatriots — Alaric avoided every word or deed that might hint at an understanding with the rebels. He is too Romanized, incidentally, to approve of these awkwardly handled and invariably unsuccessful Barbarian insurrections.

He contents himself with offering the deserters a place of refuge, seeming oblivious to the fact that Epirus has, so to say, become the rallying-place of all leaderless Barbarians.

And while the prestige of the Balthung — to whom numerous quarreling clans submit themselves — increases, his army is enlarged by new regiments. He is no longer a petty tribal chieftain, the adventurer captaining a few squadrons, but a real king, the master of a nation to which many more families join themselves with each passing day. Already a huge Barbarian federation obedient to his orders is taking shape, a concentration of scattered Gothic tribes, and the growing power of his nation continues to attract new adherents.

Unfortunately, a Barbarian people is hard to control,



without satisfying its appetites. Swelled by all the newcomers from the Rhine, the Danube and the imperial armies, the garrison of Epirus before long is bound to exhaust the resources of the country.

Why did Alaric take in these visitors, incorporate them in his regiments, and provide them with the swords and armor received from the arsenals, at the risk of arousing the distrust of the imperial ministers?

Epirus no longer satisfied his ambition. Having obtained from Constantinople all that the Empire of the Orient could give, he is now eager to secure the same rank from the Empire of the Occident, to approach Rome, to secure, finally, the position due him. The Barbarians who swell the ranks of his army will supply the needed means to force himself on Rome, as he has previously forced himself on Constantinople. They will also enable him to resist Stilicho's attack if, as he anticipates, the latter, eager to avenge the humiliating reverses he has suffered at Alaric's hands, some day takes cognizance of the serious danger the close vicinity of this Barbarian people represents to Italy. The Western general pretends to ignore it, but in that case, against whom is the powerful army he is equipping to be directed? Since he has beaten Tribigildus, and crushed the African revolt of the Mauretanian king, Gildon, why should it be necessary for him ceaselessly to review and maintain on a war footing the auxiliary regiments of Raetia, the Rhenish federates, the Gallic and British troops? Why does he stiffen his legions with companies of reserves, and arm them with perfected engines of war? Against whom does he provide such famous legions as the Invincibles and the Fortunatians, the Jovians and Herculeans with new arms and equipment?

Although enemies, great men have a kind of spiritual understanding of one another. Alaric and Stilicho hardly need spies to inform them with regard to each other's proceedings. All either need do is to consider what he himself would do under the given circumstances. Stilicho knows that the Balthung only awaits a propitious moment to formulate new demands and, if needs be, to support them by main force. Alaric, for his part, foresees that the Vandal merely awaits a favorable opportunity to crush him and rid the empire of his insatiable ambition.

The two antagonists watch each other, turn about each other, apparently indifferent, yet alive to the moment when the adversary will unmask. Neither dares begin the struggle, for there are too many risks connected with taking the offensive.

The Gothic nation, scattered as a result of the Hunnish invasion of 375 A.D., had left some tribes on the banks of the Danube, in a region not invaded by the Asiatics. There they dwelt in precarious idleness, too weak to invade a Roman province, nomads fleeing before the exhaustion of their pasture lands, bored by their inaction and humiliated by their poverty. So little danger was to be apprehended from them that Stilicho had weakened the garrisons of the Raetian forts without worrying about their proximity. They themselves could have put only a laughable number of men in the field. But Alaric, prompt to avail himself of every resource, eventually meant to make use of them to divide the Roman army, and compel it to fight on two fronts at once.

There was a great outburst of joy among these Danubian Goths when the Balthung sent to ask whether,

the case arising, he could count upon their alliance. They enthusiastically replied that they would obey the King of Goths as though he were their own chief. And, carried away by their zeal, they at once took the field, crossed the Danube and surprised the skeleton garrisons Stilicho had left. At the same time — it was in the spring of the year 401 A.D. — the Goths of Epirus, weary of grinding down an already exhausted province, forced their leader to march to Italy.

Alaric detested premature movements, yet since his people had chosen him only in order to carry out its wishes, he was obliged to accede to their tyrannic desire. As a Roman general and governor of Epirus he could not openly fling down the gage of battle to the empire. It would have been contrary to his whole policy. He was too able to imitate a rebel like Gainas, and share in an inevitable defeat. To commit so stupid a blunder would have been the most absurd thing imaginable. A break with Rome seemed to him fraught with danger, and he would rather have followed the example of Stilicho, who had gained more by serving than by attacking Rome.

Like Stilicho, Alaric wished to be *magister militum*, and generalissimo of the imperial army, not alone at Constantinople but also at Rome. Unfortunately there was no room in the empire for two Stilichos. Unless he meant to vegetate in the army of the Orient, in danger of being sent back with his people beyond the Danube at the first suspicion of disloyalty, Alaric must take a fresh stand, intimidate the Empire of the Occident as he had intimidated Constantinople, leave Epirus, as he had formerly left Moesia, march on Rome and commit himself to war with all the hazards war entails.

He hesitated to make his choice, alarmed by two equally unfavorable alternatives, but his people's precipitation committed him. The Danubian Goths proclaimed to the world at large that they were going to join Alaric, and those of Epirus went so far in their looting that it was impossible to think they did so without their chief's consent.

The government at Constantinople was aroused. The Emperor's first letters contained the rebukes ordinarily addressed to a negligent officer. In the degree that the Gothic horsemen extended the radius of their looting expeditions, these reproaches became more severe and urgent. Alaric replied vaguely and evasively, shirking definite answers. Since he had not placed himself at the head of his troops, he could not as yet be accused of treason. To tell the truth, the Goths were not making war. Without their chief's knowledge, perhaps, they were riding on plundering raids or, rather, carrying on a guerilla warfare that merely annoyed the provinces and their local garrisons.

This irregular warfare and exchange of letters continued for a year. Summoned to evict the Barbarian intruders whom he had received, Alaric was careful to pay no heed to the injunction, and continued his military preparations.

During the autumn of the year 402 A.D., the Raetian Goths had grown so menacing that Stilicho decided to bring them back into subjection, and marched against them. Alaric at once declared that he would not allow this allied nation to be attacked without cause and, together with his people, took the road taken by all Rome's Barbarian invaders of old.

## VII: THE HOSTING OF THE HORDES

**H**OW many times had not the Roman soldier traversed that road intersected by rivers and mountains, and lined with milestones each of which commemorated some victory or disaster! From Venetia to the Balkans, it had seen the legions triumphant and routed in turn. Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans and Vandals had poured along it in the mad ardor of effortless conquest. And how many times as well had they not come flooding back again in disorder, abandoning their wagons with the women and children by the roadside. Slaves had built the road like a wall, with layers of rock and huge slabs of stone, and the legionaries had cemented it with their blood. Great blond corpses had fallen on it by the thousand, and the brown-skinned soldiers whom the centurion had directed with a grapevine switch had lain down on it under the hail of singing feathered arrows and stone hatchets.

The Roman highways were venerable testimonials of the time when the roads of Rome covered all Europe. Their sections commemorated the names of the first conquests gained, league by league, over the enemy. The Roman peace had guaranteed the safety of merchants who conducted their caravans of precious merchandise over them. Later, the Barbarians who had been driven back returned, and, inversely, had followed the road the legions once had trod. For though empires are born and die, roads run on forever.



Trade roads and military roads, winding along the hills, dipping into the valleys, clinging to the mountain sides, hardly change with the passing of time. At the most they become somewhat more deeply rutted, like a river bed, under the footsteps of myriads of men.

Once again this road that followed the valleys of Laibach and of the Isonzo, saw the passage of the Gothic army moving toward Venetia. It was a nation rather than an army, for the squadrons were followed by a train of wagons crowded with their women and children.

Pushing on in disorder in the midst of the horsemen, herds of sheep and cattle tossed their bells, and the tumult of cries and bellowings, the creaking of wheels, and orders shouted by the chiefs, raised a tremendous uproar and made the inhabitants of the country tremble when they heard it.

Alaric himself commanded the advance guard, marching well aligned. The remainder of the army was scattered the length of the wagon train, each rider beside the cart in which a blonde woman sitting among furs, kitchen utensils and the heterogeneous spoils of rapine, jolted along.

The small fry clustered in the midst of the baggage watched the countryside pass with wide-open eyes, never tiring, for days, weeks and months.

They followed the road to the summit dominated by the famous pear tree at whose foot so many Barbarians had filed past. They traversed the hills already covered with snow, the narrow valleys. On hairbreadth paths they skirted the precipices through whose gorges torrents roared. They traversed Laibach, passed before Gorizia, crossed the "Cold River" famous among all

the Germanic tribes. Impatient to enter Italy, Alaric hastened the march of the horde, hardly giving his soldiers time to eat and sleep.

He had to reach Rome while Stilicho was detained in Raetia. His men slept in the saddle and devoured the bit of meat the women handed them through the leather curtains of the wagons. They stopped for a moment only at the river crossings. There the horses drank noisily, shying at the choppy waves. But it was often necessary to break a thick coat of ice to get at the water. The winter already promised to be a hard one, and several rivers were frozen.

Alaric could not hope to take the Romans by surprise. An enormous caravan like that of the Goths, comprising a hundred thousand families, could move but slowly. Stilicho had time to make his final preparations for the campaign. He believed that the crossing of the rivers and the siege of the fortified towns would long delay the Barbarians, encumbered by their wagon train. So he concentrated all the troops at his disposition, leaving only such garrisons as were necessary along the frontiers. Those farthest removed, in fact, who stood guard on the borders of Caledonia, hastily abandoned all but Hadrian's Wall and joined Stilicho's army at Milan.

Stilicho had made it a point to rally these effectives in person, in order to convince himself of their soldierly spirit, to encourage them by his presence, and to animate their martial ardor. Weeks would pass before the Goths could arrive. He had conducted the Emperor to Milan, for at this season, he thought, the rivers in flood would prevent the Goths from entering Lombardy, and even admitting that they might reach the line of the

Adige, the Oglio and the Mincio, he would find them held back by the barrier of their raging waters.

Yet how was he at the same time to chastise the Goths of Raetia, a feat which would force him to retrace his steps northward, and also bar the way of Alaric's army following the traditional road of all invaders? The eternal strategic problem that compels a leader to fight on two fronts at the same time with only one army confronted the Vandal. Should he divide his army? It was out of the question, for each part would have been inadequate, and, besides, to which general could he entrust the command of the second corps? Stilicho could rely only on himself.

By making sure of the Raetians' coöperation, Alaric had planned this very thing — to place his adversary in this critical position. To let a Barbarian rebellion continue without immediately suppressing it, was to facilitate the expansion of that spirit of revolt always active among the empire's enemies, ready to take part in any warlike movement. The fire started by some insignificant tribe might set many peoples aflame and bring about a catastrophe. On the other hand, the Goths had to be stopped before they penetrated too far into Italy. Confronted with this terrific problem, a daring tactical solution seduced the imagination of the Regent of the Occident. The son of the captain of hirsute riders once more reveals the cavalryman's initiative, the Barbarian's boldness, the German's impetuosity. He collects all the cavalry the empire can supply, black Numidians, Alans and Huns, he mounts his legionaries and hurls this army in the direction of Raetia. It is the weakest front. When he has settled with these Goths he will busy himself with Alaric. Couriers will keep him informed of the

enemy's march, one necessarily slow, because of the encumbrance of the wagon train and the difficulties caused by the snow and the torrents in spate.

Unfortunately, he has not taken into account the fact that the rivers, frozen solid by the rigor of an exceptionally cold winter, will not arrest the Goths. The horsemen and wagons will cross these roads of ice without trouble, and, carried away by his impetus, Alaric will not pause to lay siege to the towns.

He uses his enemy's own tactics, the strategy of speed. While the one thinks only of ridding himself of the Raetian Goths, in order thereafter to stop Alaric's advance, the other eats up the road to reach Lombardy before the enemy's return. It is a question of who has the best horses and the horsemen with most endurance. Alaric never leaves the saddle. He sets his soldiers the example of a man insensible to fatigue, and so great is his ascendancy over his people that all wish to imitate, to equal him. The horde surmounts all obstacles at a gallop, stimulating the horses with flailing whip and guttural cry. While Stilicho thinks his adversary is still in the far distance, marking time at the fords or shivering before city walls and trenches, the Balthung has crossed Venetia and Lombardy almost without striking a blow, and already is approaching Milan.

Informed of the unexpected advance of the Goths, the *magister militum's* first thought is for the Emperor. He must save Theodosius's son. He sends a messenger to advise him to leave Italy and take refuge in Arles, then massacres the unfortunate Raetians in an access of anger and impatience, and, victorious, hastily turns back the way he came. What matter if the soldiers be spent, if their horses founder? He commands: At full

speed! And after him the whole Roman cavalry, his Asiatics, his Negroes, his Chatti and his Cherusci precipitate themselves to the relief of the Roman empire.

To surprise Milan, secure the Emperor, wrest from him the object of his ambition, the supreme command of the armies, to evict Stilicho, dishonored by his setback, subject the weak monarch to his will, become the real master of the Roman world, such was Alaric's dream as he, too, galloped at full speed over the frozen rivers and across the frozen snows of the hills and defiles. Why should he lose time capturing towns when such splendid booty awaited him in Lombardy, when he was nearing Rome and victory hung on the swiftness of his course?

But at Stilicho's order all the Roman soldiery marches to converge on Milan. He himself drives on his exhausted squadrons to bar the invaders' road.

From Aquileia to Milan the masses of Barbarian cavalry gallop in a rivalry of promptness and energy. The Venetians and Lombards watch Stilicho's squadrons and Alaric's horde pass in indescribable tumult. The Balthung rides at the head of his horsemen, his chariots lumbering on in the rear. The terrified country folk have hardly time to mark the blond locks, the high bronze helmets with their fantastic ornamentation, the floating mantles of fur. They do not know whether these are Roman auxiliaries or invaders, for the same races serve in both armies. And the Vandal, too, gallops in advance of his regiments. As he draws nearer anguish grips his soul; will he arrive in time to save the Emperor?

Honorius, frightened and docile, has followed his advice and left Milan. But instead of going to Arles —



which he thought too far removed — according to the Regent's advice, he has stopped at Asti.

The Milanese lived in a terrible state of apprehension. In Stilicho's absence there was no army to cover the city, and its garrison was too feeble to have resisted effectively. Trembling, they watched the dustclouds that rose on the skyline. Was it the Goths whose imminent arrival the scouts announced? Or was it Stilicho?

One morning the distant thunder of hoofs alarmed the city. All the inhabitants rushed to the walls, in spite of the protests of the officers. Through the haze could be glimpsed a dark, indistinct mass, growing in size, and the vibrations that herald the approach of a great body of cavalry swelled to a precipitate, panting, terrifying rhythmic beat. The noise soon became deafening.

Ballistas, onagers and catapults had hastily been loaded, archers and slingers were in position on the tower platforms, and all was in readiness to repel attack when, suddenly, there was a silence. The army had arrived. Thousands of eyes searched the dust clouds but could make out only an immense throng undulating a short distance from the walls. Then, in the silence, voices were heard. They called out to open the gates, but the guards, apprehending some trick, dared not obey.

The haze disappeared, and it was possible to distinguish a group of horsemen who had drawn rein before the ramparts. And when the sun, piercing the clouds, suddenly shone on a head with long white locks, the whole city recognized him. From soldiers and citizens burst a great cry of joy — Stilicho!

The army was already entering the gates, and Claudian, who accompanied his protector at the head of

his cohort, made note in his tablets, to serve for the Vandal's panegyric to come, of the enthusiasm that distracted the inhabitants, and soon was translating into harmonious strophes the jubilation of this entry into Milan:

"He is come! Alarm subsides, the gates open, letting out an enormous crowd of citizens hastening to acclaim the return of our standards. These are no wretched recruits or harvest hands who, dropping the scythe, cast unavailing darts with uncertain arm. Here Bellona, with a mocking laugh, ignores Ceres who, casting down her sheaves, essays to lift the buckler. These are not the noisy clamors of new and untried captains. This is the warrior youth, the true strength, of Rome; this is a real general, living image of the god of battles!"

While the Milanese split their lungs shouting, "Long live Stilicho!" and the horsemen climb out of the saddles of their steaming mounts with a sigh of relief, Alaric, furious at the thought that his enemy has outgalloped him and is barring the road to Milan at the moment he meant to take the city, decides to give his army a few days of rest. Haste is no longer essential; a surprise is now out of the question.

He took advantage of the respite to summon the tribal chiefs and ancients to a council of war. Not that he attached importance to their rambling counsel, but because the national custom forced him to have his important decisions ratified by this species of parliament. The army was already grumbling. The Goths said the wagons were loaded with all the booty they could hold, and, such being the case, all that was left to do was to fall back. For the Goths were not fond of adventure for adventure's sake, but because of the profit they

could draw from it. In calling this "Thing," the Balthung knew that most of his lieutenants would flatly oppose his wish to continue his Romeward march, but — he felt he must respect the custom of his people.

At the sound of the prolonged bronze trumps the members of the council, venerated because of their age or their exploits, gathered in the king's tent. These old men with long beards, wrapped in furs, arrived one by one, leaning on their lances encrusted with gold and ivory. And with them came the youthful chieftains famed for bravery in battle or wisdom in the debates of the "Thing."

Seated on wooden stools, squatting on rugs and sheepskins, the Goths formed a circle around their king.

In accordance with tradition, the dean of the assembly was the first to speak. He was almost a centenarian, and had been old when the young Balthung was first entrusted to his care. In view of his years Alaric listened with attention when he spoke, and usually followed his advice.

The ancient rose from his seat with an effort, and resting both hands on the pommel of his long sword, somewhat bent and tremulant, said: "Some thirty years have passed since we crossed the Danube, and during all those years we have constantly escaped the efforts of the Roman armies, yet we have never been in such danger as we are to-day. Take the word of an old man experienced in war, who has dandled you when a child, loved you as a father and was the first to teach you to draw the bow. Our expedition has been entirely successful, for we have gathered rich booty. Why seek more? Do not draw us into this Italy that has always been fatal to Barbarians. You say you wish to take Rome?

None of those who dared besiege it have returned alive, for they say the old gods are strong and that they still protect her, though most of the inhabitants adore Christ, as we do. You smile? You do not believe in the gods? Be it so. Yet do not forget that if the gods be far away Stilicho is near at hand. And remember that if the tricks of the Byzantines had not stopped him, we would all have been slain at Pholoe! ”

Poets, so it is claimed, have a right to hear everything said throughout the universe. It is certain that Claudian, tribune of the fifth cohort, was not present at the council of the Goths, but rumor brought him the words of Alaric's aged tutor, and he set them down in his tablets.

But it is Alaric who rises in his turn as soon as the old man has concluded. The opposition he senses in every member of the assembly inflames his rage and ambition. He is about to fling in the faces of these timorous and easily satisfied men all that he has hidden within him, he is about to uncover his soul, to flout their senile fears. And though he addresses them in Gothic, it is his recollection of the Latin poets that guides his speech and marshals its ironic and furious cadences.

“ Did not the senility that has chilled your blood and deprived you of reason warrant indulgence, I swear that Ister, goddess of our native land, would not let the cowardly words you have uttered to go unavenged. I, who so many times — as Heber, the river of Thrace, can attest — have made the Caesars flee; I, who have seen all nature obey my commands, mountains flatten themselves before me, rivers dry up to let me pass, am I to submit tamely to your shameful advice, to consent to flee? No, no! May the protecting gods of the Goths, may

the souls of our ancestors, grant that I never again, as a fugitive, see the places I traversed in my triumph! ”

The chiefs listened in admiration to this sonorous voice that lay down the law to men, gods and the elements. It seemed to them that the Balthung increased in stature as he spoke, that his eyes darted lightnings, that he was urged on by a supernatural power. Already he was no longer expressing an opinion, he was uttering a command, and, docile, they once more obeyed him. And as a swordsman deals a blow he flung out the following words:

“ I shall not leave the soil of Italy. I shall reign over it a victor, or it shall be my tomb. In my swift march I burst the Alpine barriers. I have dipped my victorious helmet in the waters of the Eridan. Only Rome is left for me to conquer. Our nation was already redoubtable because of its strength when, lacking allies, it relied on itself alone. But since the empire has ceded me its rights to Illyria, and this nation has recognized me as its chief, I have compelled Thrace to forge my arrows, swords and helmets by the sweat of her brow. I am the rightful owner of these erstwhile Roman cities, and I have forced them to pay me the tribute of iron of which my army stood in need! ”

As he spoke he raised his sword, and those present thought they beheld one of the heroic giants of whom their ancient legends told. And, besides, there was a world of daring and confidence in his pose.

“ Yes, Fortune favors me! She has given me for slaves the peoples who, every year exposed to my ravages, bewail themselves as they deliver to me the arms that have been so fatal to them. What do I say? The gods themselves have encouraged me, not by dreams or



the flight of birds, but by a voice that spoke clearly to me in the depth of a sacred forest: 'Delay no longer, Alaric! Be of good cheer, and if your army crosses the Italian Alps, you will attain the City — there your march shall end! ' "

As he repeated the oracle's words, he seemed to hear once more the prophetic rustling of the branches. He once more saw the black shadows of the Thessalian forest, the knotted oak-boles, the dead leaves that crackled beneath his horse's hoofs. The oracle whose secret he had kept to himself, he this day cried aloud to all, seeing that their confidence was weakening, that their warlike spirit had to be reawakened and sustained by some supernatural word of command.

The king watched them with a smile of triumph. He repeated, this time in Latin, the mysterious words "*Penetrabis ad Urbem*," and these strange sounds, incomprehensible to them, filled the superstitious Barbarians with holy awe. Can one disobey a supernatural voice promising victory?

Alaric resumed his seat, laid his sword across his knees, and swept his auditors with a glance that convinced him of their obedience. The old men nodded their heads, repeating the words of the oracle — they were clear and unequivocal. The young men recalled travellers' accounts of the fabulous riches of Rome. Why not tempt Fortune once more?

Assured of his victory, the Balthing asked the time-honored question: "Which among you now wishes to speak?" The reply was a unanimous cry of confidence and enthusiasm, so clamorous, so convincing, that hearing it the warriors seated outside the tent took it up, and it was carried to the outermost ring of the chariots.

The cry expressed the comprehensive, passionate adhesion of a whole race. Alaric could now lead the Goths to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Had he really heard the voice whose words he had just repeated? Was it a voicing of his ambition, that had externalized itself? Did the complaisant murmur of the wind through the branches merely tell him what he wished to hear? What difference does it make? He has no need of the consent of God or of the gods in order to take Rome. A daring will, a vigorous fist grasping the hilt of a trusty sword, will suffice.

## VIII: GOOD FRIDAY MASSACRE

THE Gothic army had come to a halt in the plain adjacent to Pollentia, southeast of Turin. Stilicho lost no time in confronting it. The two opponents watched each other, but neither could decide to take the offensive.

They observed a sort of tacit truce during the first days of the month of April. Easter was approaching, and both shrank from defiling with blood this festival, the most solemn of the Christian year. Since the beginning of Holy Week the Roman Catholics and Arians, each in their own camp, had been celebrating the rites of the church. To take up arms at such a moment would have seemed sacrilegious, an offence to God.

The Barbarian chieftains in Stilicho's train did not hesitate to ridicule this pious interruption of hostilities, and the Vandal himself, seeing in his mind's eye the Goths kneeling, singing canticles and confessing their sins, thought — for all he was a good Christian — that it would have been an ideal moment for a surprise attack. A crafty little Tatar who commanded the Alans, Säul by name, insinuated that on Good Friday, while Alaric's soldiers, gathered in a circle, were listening to the homilies of the Arian priests, a pagan might without scruple or remorse do what was forbidden a Christian. The wooden idols Säul worshipped cared nothing about the Easter Festival, and, besides, there was an axiom stronger than any divine command, when it came to war: the end justifies the means.

foot sacred images and vessels, attack with blows of sword and lance the priests who implore them to respect the day and shed no blood, in honor of the blood the Savior himself shed upon the Cross.

So great is the number of assailants that the ring of chariots is broken on all sides, and in an indescribable confusion the whole Roman army invades the camp. The trumpets of the legionaries, the *bucinae*, sound a triumphal march; the Alans, in their guttural tongue, cry victory.

The Goths receive this unexpected aggression with great shouts of rage. Seizing what arms they can lay hands on, and flinging themselves bareback on their horses, they seek their chiefs and standards amid the disorder. Yet how can the squadrons be rallied in the midst of overturned tents, and broken wagons, with terrified cattle in bellowing stampede on every side?

Alaric realizes that surprise has made the Romans masters of the situation. It would be folly to attempt to resist. He leaps from his horse, and, instead of rallying his men for battle, commands a retreat. His reiterated cry, repeated by all his officers, carries the Goths at a gallop from the scene of combat.

Is this the chieftain whose intrepidity has been so vaunted, mocks Stilicho, as the Barbarians get in each other's way in order to flee the swifter? And, enchanted with a victory so cheaply won, his soldiers, disdaining useless pursuit, lay hand on the magnificent booty tents and wagons offer — vases of gold, rugs, furs, blonde women, handsome children. They burden their backs with precious articles, and undo their helmets to fill them with jewels and gold pieces.

The triumphant clamors of trumpets, the women's



The Goths Invade Italy





cries of despair, the wailing of the children, the legionaries' hurrahs prevent them from hearing the noise of an approaching gallop. An officer of the German auxiliaries advises the generals to have the legionaries fall in, for the Goths are drawing near. . . . And now there sounds the twanging of a thousand bowstrings, and the Balthung's banner surges above the mêlée. Preoccupied with pride in their victory and the delights of pillage, the Romans have forgotten that the flight of the Goths is merely a traditional subterfuge of these Barbarians. Instead of resisting haphazard, Alaric has carried his squadrons away from the camp, there realigned them, and is now leading to battle not a panic-stricken crowd, but a compact, resolute army, determined to gain the day.

Surprised in turn, the legionaries — torn between the haughtiness of triumph and the love of loot — prefer to sacrifice glory to profit. They flee at full speed, loaded with spoil, and driving their captives before them. It is the Goths who now have an opportunity to cut to pieces an unarmed enemy.

While the Slavic cavalry tries to hold back Alaric's squadrons, the latter finds himself confronted by the general of the Alans, the treacherous Saül, who had advised the cowardly and sacrilegious aggression. The two Barbarian leaders rush against each other. Swords ring on bucklers. Their chargers rear and neigh with pain as the heavy blades slash them.

There are no longer two armies in action, only individuals. Around them the tide of battle flows and ebbs. The Gothic horsemen break against the bristling squares of the legionaries, who fall back foot by foot, closing their ranks. But the struggle of these two men,

careless of the fate of empires, is as savage as though they were alone in the midst of the steppe.

Suddenly Saül utters a howl of despair and glides from his saddle. Alaric laughs, brandishes his blood-stained sword, and, rid of his enemy, at once gallops in search of new adversaries.

The Goths pursue the Romans to their tents, but there are stopped by the engines of war and the reserve regiments, and hasten to beat a retreat to their devastated camp, without having been able to recover their women, children and possessions.

Each of the antagonists has a right to think himself the victor, Alaric because he had regained his position, Stilicho because he had carried off the treasures of the Goths and, among his captives, the royal family of the Balthungs. The losses on either side were very heavy. A large number of Latin prisoners had been liberated, and a crowd of Goths surrounded by the legionaries sadly passed into the *ergastula*, where the women and children were held as slaves, or into the *ludi*, the "schools" for gladiators, where the men were held while awaiting the arena games in which they were to die.

It was an indecisive victory, nevertheless, and the Vandal was so well aware of its indecisiveness that he offered the Balthung a peace that the latter did not refuse. The Goths remained a menace, in spite of their defeat; it was wiser to treat with them. Stilicho offered to return his wife and children to Alaric, and to guarantee safety of life and limb to his people on condition that he and they leave Italy at once.

These conditions were humiliating to the king's pride, but to refuse them would have entailed a general massa-

cre. A great many Goths had been killed during the surprise of their camp. Hardly a soldier surviving was unwounded. Alaric resigned himself. He admitted his repulse. Rather than pig-headedly trying to continue the war on unfavorable terms, prudence bade him accept Stilicho's offer. Yet what a wound to his self-esteem to admit himself beaten by the Roman, what a deplorable end for a campaign that had begun so triumphantly!

The two leaders met a little distance from the camp. Both were very tall, very vigorous men, splendidly daring and authoritative in appearance, and they measured each other with their glances like antagonists equally matched. Divining the Goth's sensitive pride, Stilicho did not boast of his triumph, and did not stress his superiority as a famous and aged general when confronting his young rival.

For his part Alaric, with unfeigned humility, expressed his admiration for the Vandal's great deeds, and his desire some day to rival him in valor and glory.

For the first time since fate had opposed them to each other the two Barbarian chiefs were treating man to man. The affair of Pollentia had been a surprise rather than a battle, properly speaking. Yet it had convinced Stilicho of the military capacity of the Goth, whose presence of mind and reckless bravery had prevented the surprise from turning into a disaster for the whole Gothic nation. As for Alaric, he regretted that he had not followed his officers' advice, and sensed that if the Romans wished to take the offensive he would be placed in an extremely dangerous position. An agreement between them was the best solution.

The historian has no right to invent, yet he may be

allowed to imagine the meeting of these two men who followed different roads to gain the same goal, the only two men who, in that day — as, later Attila <sup>1</sup> and Aetius — were able to understand each other. Between them existed the same emulation that animates two rivals of equal strength and genius. There was admiration and, no doubt, some jealousy — Stilicho envied the Balthung, who was not bound to Theodosius by a vow of fealty, while Alaric envied the Vandal who had the honor of ruling Rome — and also the feeling that there was not room for two such men in the Roman world.

Was any thought of collaboration born of this interview? Stilicho was old, would he not remember that Alaric was under forty, and that he might soon need a successor? And would not the general regret his inability to make use of this ambitious young man for the service of the empire? Did they that day outline a pact that would unite them against Constantinople?

History's silence is so marked, so rigorous, that no hypothesis has a right to obtrude itself. And no matter what they may have said to each other at this cross-roads meeting, their paths soon after diverged. Alaric returned to Greece, and since the whole empire looked on his retreat as proof positive of the Roman victory, the solemn honors of a triumph were accorded to Honorius.

How tumultuous was the joy in the streets of Rome, where the people crowded to see the procession pass! It was known that during the advance of the Goths the Emperor had taken no interest in anything except the poultry that he had left in Milan, and that he feared

<sup>1</sup> See "Attila: The Scourge of God," by the same author.



might fall into the Barbarians' hands. For he was very proud of his poultry yard, to which he added exotic breeds at great expense, and nothing pleased him so much as to listen to the piercing crowing of his cocks. In spite of this he stood majestically in his chariot of state, the "Victor of Pollentia," in consular robes, crowned with the golden diadem, and wearing a necklace of enormous emeralds. He had, however, consented to allow Stilicho to share his triumph. He had taken him into his own chariot, and the acclamations of the multitude identified victorious soldier and derided monarch with a common enthusiasm. The senators and great dignitaries of the realm accompanied him, with the Empress Marie, Stilicho's daughter, who held her young brother Eucherius by the hand.

Madly eager for free shows, the Roman populace, trampling about in the puddles, crushed against house fronts, admired the martial sternness of the legionaries, and marvelled at the fur vests, leather corselets, and motley standards carried by the Barbarian auxiliaries. The passage of the Huns, hanging to the manes of their Mongolian ponies, called forth exclamations of surprise and fear. The onlookers pointed out the numerous captives brought back by the victorious host, and the still more numerous crowd of rescued prisoners bringing up the rear of the procession. They embroidered with a thousand jests and comments the prediction that had encouraged Alaric: "*Penetrabis ad Urbem*," and the amusing confirmation chance had given it, for as a matter of fact Alaric had come as far as Urbs, a little stream that flowed near the battle field of Pollentia and emptied into the Po, some five miles from Asti.

When the procession ended the people were still mill-

ing in the streets. They were excitedly discussing the games that were to be given that afternoon, for which wild beasts had been brought from Asia and Africa. The captured Goths were to supplement the efforts of the gladiators in an agreeable manner.

The Circus was crowded to the highest tier of seats by a noisy crowd. The impatient spectators ate fruit and quarreled among themselves, or bandied jests to kill time. When Honorius and Stilicho appeared side by side in the imperial box, an immense acclamation greeted them, but it was a tribute to the presiding patrons of the games rather than to the victors in war. The show would be long drawn out, for it was to include military dances, chariot races and, in conclusion, gladiatorial combats.

The dances bored the spectators. To watch soldiers who were satisfied to beat time with their feet while they banged their swords against their neighbors' shields was not very interesting for a crowd that was thirsting to see blood. The chariot races were better received. The tiers rose and yelled, there was a frantic waving of hands, and when a chariot crashed against the goal post, there were sighs of regret and howls of joy.

After the chariots had circled the course for the last time, and slaves had dragged off the wrecked chariots and mutilated horses, the wild beasts were let in.

Skillful hunters fought the savage animals, but this seemed too long drawn out, and the crowd clamored for the gladiators. Then, to make a quick end, all the beasts were let loose in the arena at the same time, and for a moment the people were amused by the sight of bears, tigers, panthers, elephants and lions tearing one an-

other to pieces. The carcasses were dragged off, and, at last, the arena was turned over to the gladiators.

Among the spectators were many Roman soldiers, yet there were still more of that idle and cowardly populace who enjoyed battles only by hearsay, and to whom the gladiatorial combats afforded the voluptuous pleasure of seeing human blood flow. To increase the prestige of the games in celebration of the victory, it had been decided to set against the professionals of the arena, the Gothic prisoners of war captured at Pollentia. It was an atrocious massacre, committed amid the plaudits of an insatiable crowd that ever clamored for more victims. The applause changed to cries of fury, however, when the combat suddenly stopped. A man in a brown cassock suddenly appeared among the gladiators, begging them to cease fighting. He managed to make his way to the imperial box, and his powerful voice could be heard imploring the Emperor to put a stop to the carnage and forbid a spectacle that dishonored all Christians.

Some one recognized him, and his name went from mouth to mouth — the monk Telemachus! As the monk continued his pleas, some madmen rushed from the seats and flung themselves on him. While the crowd, delighted with this surprise attack, encouraged them with its shouts, they dragged the wretched Telemachus completely around the arena, and trampled on his dead body. As the gladiators fell to again, the atrociously dismembered corpse of the man who had thought to rob the Roman mob of its sanguinary pleasure was removed.

## IX: STILICHO PASSES

**I**T was an exhausted, starving army, very different from the dauntless, joyous horsemen the terrified Venetians had watched parade before the walls of Aquileia that regained Epirus. It had left in the hands of the Romans all the treasure acquired in Greece and, an even crueller loss, a large number of prisoners.

Thousands of Goths had been slain at Pollentia, and those among the wounded unable to keep up with the retreat fell by the roadsides and did not rise again. Instead of precious loot the wagons were filled with soldiers unable to march. No song rose from the ranks of this vanquished and humiliated army. Alaric gazed with despairing chagrin at the once brilliant squadrons that had pranced before him waving lance and bow, and that now dragged along, downcast by hunger, weariness and disappointment.

Enfeebled like themselves, still nursing his wounds, but mastering the resultant dizziness, their king passed from one to the other, supporting the horseman about to drop from the saddle, and with jests stopping the recriminations of the discontented.

In the distance could be seen the standards and plumes of the Roman army that trailed the Goths, fearing their departure was merely a blind and ready to crush them at the first good excuse. The names by which the legionaries described the vanquished horde were a further humiliation added to the shame of defeat.

At times Alaric would gallop in person to the advance guard to reconnoitre the road and avoid possible traps laid for him. The Italian natives who had gone into hiding in their terror a few months before, when the Barbarian squadrons rode by in triumph on their way to Milan, now revenged themselves for the fear they had suffered by shouting menaces and insults at their beaten foes as they passed. Excited by fanatics who urged them to attack the Goths and make them pay for the terror they had endured, they received the Barbarian soldiery too feeble to resist them, with showers of stones.

The peasants laid ambushes, hiding near the places where the fugitives would pass. Then they would whirl their slings, drop a few horsemen and take to their legs. To pursue them and draw sword in self-defence against these cowardly bull-baiters would have called forth an attack on the part of the Roman troops superintending the retreat. These shameful aggressions, that drove the Goths to terrible fits of impotent rage, had to be endured without possibility of reprisals.

Sometimes the Balthung would ride back to the rear guard to encourage stragglers, taking some horseman whose mount had fallen behind, helping to patch a broken harness or repair a wagon wheel. For those Goths who strayed from the column or loitered in the rear were captured by the Italians and reduced to slavery, or massacred if their wounds made them useless as slaves.

The fugitives suffered cruelly from hunger. Unable to feed their horses, they slew them to drink their blood and eat their flesh, in spite of the prohibition of the Balthung, who ceaselessly repeated that a horse was



worth a man. But the poor, exhausted beasts, deprived of forage, shivered and swayed under their riders' weight. The menacing hostility of the Italians made access to pasture impossible, and the splendid chargers were reduced to gnawing the bark of trees.

When the army approached Verona, the population of the countryside, up in arms, flung itself upon the Goths. In order to avoid a massacre Alaric had to take refuge in the city and there barricade himself to escape the furious throngs. The Roman generals following him pretended that the Goths had attacked the Veronese without provocation, and put them outside the walls. The retreat now degenerated into a veritable flight, and the Barbarians made all haste to escape into Illyria.

With what joy they greeted the fat Epirote pastures! They had by now tasted adventure to the full; all they asked was repose to allow them to regain strength, repose and peace.

Having brought back the broken remnants of his army to his province Alaric thought how he could fill the gaps that yawned in his squadrons. He invited some independent German tribes to come and join him. He held out the prospect of good pay to all willing to enroll under his banner. Not that he meant to wage war in the immediate future: the resources at his disposal were too inadequate, and he had left some of his sons at Rome, as hostages in Stilicho's hands, as a guarantee of the peace made after the battle of Pollentia. Yet if he did not even consider the possibility of a new offensive, he would have to be ready to withstand the imperial troops should they pursue him into Epirus. His actual weakness exposed him to every attack.

The setback he had suffered might have serious con-

sequences. What would the government at Constantinople think of the conduct of an officer who hied himself off to devastate Italy? His audacity might have been pardoned had he rid the Byzantines of Stilicho, the enemy they feared and hated, but Stilicho had beaten him, which left him without an excuse. Would the Eastern empire still be willing to entrust Epirus to a rebel general who had implicitly admitted his ambitious plans? Intimidation and menace were the best means at the disposal of the Barbarian chieftains to make themselves acceptable to Rome, and yet — might he not have gone too far?

Tormented by these disquieting thoughts and, nevertheless, stimulated by the hope that he refused to surrender, Alaric superintended the military training of his new recruits. The quantities of reserve arms accumulated in the Epirote magazines made it possible for him to equip the reinforcements sent him by the Danubian Goths and the Germans of the Hercynian forest. For he still feared Stilicho might take advantage of the lamentable condition of his people to seek him out and crush him.

Fortunately, the Roman army, also sorely tried by the campaign, was no better able to undertake an offensive expedition than that of Alaric. It had to make good a great deal of damage done it. Stilicho knew that the lesson given the Goths would prevent them from effectively threatening the safety of the empire for some time to come. Hence he devoted the year following the victory of Pollentia to works of defense that would enable Italy to resist a new invasion. He restored the ruined towns, fortified the river crossings, and turned Ravenna into an impregnable city to serve as the Em-

peror's future abode, making it the real capital of the empire. Founded by the Thessalians, situated on the Adriatic some twelve and a half miles south of the mouth of the Po, it occupied an admirable strategic position. Surrounded by marshes and pine forests, it was connected with the river by a canal that supplied it with drinking water and filled its moats. The greater part of the city having been built on piles, it was easy to defend. Augustus had had a harbor able to hold a hundred and fifty ships of war dug at Ravenna, and had erected all the buildings necessary for a naval base — magazines, arsenals, barracks and work shops. Menaced by Barbarian invasions the government would find Ravenna an impregnable refuge.

The ramparts of Rome were fortified as well. The Aurelian wall, that surrounded a city whose circumference was greater than that of the old city of Servius, had been built toward the end of the second century. Incorporating in itself the mural supports of the Pinian Gardens, the wall with which Tiberius had encircled the Praetorian Camp, the arches of the Marcian and Claudian Aqueducts, and the Wall of the *Ampitheatrum Castrense*, it established a solid line of defence more than eleven miles in length. Three hundred and eighty-one towers round or square, projecting boldly, rose at intervals of a hundred feet. They were connected by courtines fifty-two feet high and thirteen feet thick at the bottom. A lofty gallery surmounted by a guard-way traversed the thickness of the wall. Seven thousand and twenty battlements and two thousand and fifty-five loopholes gave on the exterior of the wall. This Aurelian Wall was repaired and once more put in a perfect state of defence.

These precautions were not taken in vain, and fate was once again to demonstrate how precarious was the safety of Italy. At the beginning of the year 405, a Barbarian people numbering from 200,000 to 400,000 men invaded Liguria under the command of Radagaisus, an Obitrite by birth, who had been dispossessed by the Huns and had taken refuge in Germany. At the same time the Franks of Marcomir rebelled and raided part of Gaul. There was some apprehension lest Alaric profit by these disorders to invade the empire anew, but he had too many wounds of his own to nurse to allow him to undertake a new expedition.

The following year, after Radagaisus had been crushed at Florence with the aid of the Huns, fresh revolts broke out in Gaul. The Vandals and the Alans had occupied several provinces, the Scotch and the Irish had seized Amorica, and, strengthened by their support, an adventurer, Constantine, had declared himself independent and master of Gaul.

It was at this moment that Alaric, who had profitably employed his years of respite to reconstitute his cavalry, suggested to the Regent the alliance of which he stood in need.

To become Stilicho's ally was to draw nearer to Rome, the goal of his ambition. The rank bestowed on him by the Empire of the East no longer sufficed him. He wished to have the same rank bestowed on him by Honorius, and he hoped that Stilicho's support would help him to leave the service of Constantinople for that of Rome. This could be done by agreement between the two Emperors. The territories of the Orient had nothing to fear, whereas Italy was menaced by numerous enemies on all her frontiers; hence it would be natural for

Honorius to secure from his brother the right to use the Gothic contingents quartered in Epirus for his defence. If Constantinople refused, Alaric need only break with her of his own free will and, without further airs and graces, enter into the employ of the Empire of the Occident.

Stilicho knew that it was dangerous to call the Goths to Italy, but could not one accept Alaric's offer and utilize them in Greece or Gaul? He managed to persuade Honorius of the necessity of regaining by force the Illyrian provinces occupied by his brother, the possession of which was essential to Italy. Alaric, already installed in Greece, would be able to master them without any trouble.

The Balthung used this intervention as an excuse for his desired break with Constantinople. The peace enjoyed by the Empire of the Orient did not suit his Goths at all, and he, having obtained the rank of *magister militum* from Arcadius, had nothing further to expect from him. And, finally, there was no comparison between the prestige of Byzantium and that of Rome. Serving the former had merely supplied Alaric with a means of leaving Moesia and resuming active service in the Roman army, but he had never intended to end his career in the army of the Orient.

He had to have Rome, Italy, the monuments that testified to the glory of the days of old. The wily, treacherous Orientals seemed contemptible to him who wished to become a true Latin, a Roman of Rome, the fellow-citizen of a Cincinnatus and a Scaevola. Hence he accepted the Vandal's offer and made ready for war. He bought arms and food, equipped his regiments with new helmets and corselets, and awaited the advent of Stili-



cho, who was to put himself at the head of these troops and take possession of Eastern Illyria in the name of Rome, or lead them to Gaul against Constantine. But Stilicho did not arrive, and the day set for their meeting had long ago passed when a messenger brought him a letter from the Vandal. When the expedition was about to begin Honorius — somewhat tardily bethinking himself of his fraternal duties — had objected to the conquest of Illyricum and had forbidden his general to leave Italy.

The change of attitude modified the relations between Alaric and the empire. From this disagreement between Honorius and his minister the King of the Goths divined that the Vandal's influence was on the decline, and that — should the lack of harmony deprive Rome of the only man able to save her — a fresh opportunity to intervene in Italian affairs might result. Alaric kept the messenger until the following day, when he dismissed him with a letter in which he insisted on being reimbursed for his expenditures. The expedition into Illyricum was abandoned: well and good, but he had prepared for the campaign in question and had spent a great deal of money to arm his soldiers and gather the supplies necessary for their subsistence. He asked no compensation for what he had failed to secure, but merely the repayment of his outlays, which he estimated at four thousand pounds of gold.

This claim was absolutely legitimate, even though the price asked might seem excessive. The Emperor would be unable to reject it. Four thousand pounds of gold might well represent the value of what the pillage of Illyria would have brought the Goths, and it was best to secure it without striking a blow.

Contrary to his expectations, the Emperor rejected this demand when Stilicho transmitted it to him. If he had forbidden the Grecian expedition it was because a more favorable opportunity had presented itself to gain possession of that province without combat. Arcadius, Emperor of the Orient, had died, leaving as his successor a child of eight who was to be vested with the purple under the name of Theodosius II. It was probable that this succession would occasion great difficulties, and that Honorius's presence in Constantinople would be absolutely necessary to advise and assist his youthful nephew. In other words, his brother's decease supplied the Emperor with an excellent pretext to lay hand on the Empire of the Orient, or, in any event, to regain possession of Illyricum without drawing the sword.

The reëstablishment of Roman unity had always been one of Stilicho's greatest preoccupations, and he could not but approve of his master's wish to realize it. Unfortunately, it did not seem a favorable moment to go to Constantinople. Would not Constantine, master of Gaul, take advantage of his absence to extend his conquests and descend into Italy?

The situation along the frontiers was too critical to leave Ravenna under the circumstances. Besides, it would be a very expensive trip, for the soldiery and host of servants in attendance on the Emperor would be very numerous, and to the usual difficulties under which the treasury labored would be added the obligation to pay Alaric the four thousand pounds of gold he demanded.

But Honorius did not wish to give up his trip, and sent Alaric's claim to the Senate, well knowing how that body would receive the Goth's demand. Of late the

underhand campaign of hostility which in the guise of an "anti-Barbarian movement" was especially aimed at Stilicho, had become particularly acute. The minister's every move was interpreted as a sign of weakness, or even worse, with regard to the empire. Those who dared not openly accuse him of treason condemned him under their breath for his slackening zeal, his partiality for the Barbarians, his inexplicable indulgence with respect to Alaric. In the Senate, a very powerful faction headed by Lampadius opposed all the Vandal's proposals on principle. When it was discovered that the order of business at the next session included the ratification of an agreement that would deprive the treasury of four thousand pounds of gold meant for the Goth, preparations were made for a decisive battle that would result in the fall of Stilicho or the defeat of the anti-Barbarian party.

Alaric awaited the outcome with much impatience. If Rome refused to pay the money she owed him, he had resolved to come and take it from her coffers in person. If she did pay, he could use the sum for a war against Constantinople — something Stilicho, perhaps, secretly hoped he would do. The Vandal's policy had so many detours that this last hypothesis is very probable. In such case Alaric would have been no more than his agent, his instrument, for a war that, after all, would have been of advantage to the empire, whether it once more attached Byzantium to Rome, or served to crush Constantine's revolt in Gaul.

Stilicho overcame the Senate's resistance, in spite of the animosity of Lampadius, but it was his last victory. The debt owed to Alaric was ratified amid indescribable tumult. Wavering between Stilicho and

Lampadius, the assembly hooted and cheered, turn and turn about. At the end of the session the beaten Lampadius and his friends took refuge in a church to escape the Vandal's wrath.

The anti-Barbarian campaign was not confined to political circles; it spread to the army and the populace. The wives of the Germanic auxiliaries were insulted, beaten and outraged. Among the legionaries, made up of Latin soldiers, the ancient hatred for the Barbarians suffered a violent rebirth. All the services they had rendered, the victories over Eugenius, over Radagaisus, due to them, were forgotten. The predilection shown by Stilicho for his cavalry, made up of Goths, Vandals, Alans, Burgundians and Franks, insulted the infantry, which was exclusively Roman. And how could one expect anything else on the part of a man of Germanic origin, and one, so it was hinted, secretly attached to the traditions of his race? He was accused of selling the empire to Alaric, of plotting with him to dethrone the Emperor. Olympius, the new favorite, acquainted Honorius with the extent of the popular disaffection and predicted tragic consequences.

Stilicho, notwithstanding, had convinced the Emperor of the urgent necessity of crushing the Gallic revolt, which threatened to spread and embrace Italy. Since Alaric's army had been equipped, it would be better to use it and send it against Constantine. Honorius agreed and decided to review the soldiers himself. The King of the Goths was instructed to hold himself in readiness to march, and the son of Theodosius left for Pavia, where his legions were encamped, while Stilicho went to Boulogne to take command of the Barbarian auxiliaries; he was then to rejoin the Emperor at Ravenna.

The legions, long before inflamed by Olympius' agents, only awaited a pretext to mutiny. The Emperor supplied them with one by announcing, on his minister's advice, that they would fight in Gaul, aided by Alaric and the Goths. This meant that the Roman soldier would suffer all the fatigue and danger, while the Barbarian horsemen gained all the profits of the war.

A mysterious watchword circulated through the barracks. In the middle of the night the Emperor was awakened by a great uproar. The legionaries had revolted, had slain the Barbarian horsemen of the monarch's escort, and massacred the city magistrates. They were burning the houses, and even threatened the building in which the Emperor was lodged.

Accustomed to defer to the opinions of his counselors, Honorius, greatly alarmed, begged Olympius to rescue him from this pass. What did the legions demand? Stilicho's head, was the minister's curt rejoinder. The Emperor sighed, gestured vaguely as though to say: "See that it is attended to," and fell asleep again.

The revolt of Pavia was the signal for a merciless war against the German auxiliaries. The isolated detachments, with their women and children, were put to the sword. The squadrons in Boulogne were already in arms, imploring Stilicho to put an end to these butcheries, and, if necessary, to lead them against the Emperor. Confronted with the alternative of choosing between his love for his countrymen and loyalty to the empire, Stilicho refused to draw his sword. He thought it impossible that the Emperor could have sanctioned such an infamy. The order could not but be rescinded. It was then that some of the Gothic chiefs decided to disobey his injunctions: Saurus, ambitious and secretly



anxious to take his place, even tried to assassinate him; the Vandal was saved only by the faithful Huns of his bodyguard. Yet, as the auxiliaries were growing more and more threatening, and, before long, he would no longer be able to control them if the Emperor, for his part, did not reëstablish discipline among the legions, he set out for Ravenna.

While galloping on his way, a few hours distant from the city gates, a Barbarian courier whom he encountered informed him that a general order to seize his person had been sent out. But Stilicho kept on and reached Ravenna toward nightfall. There he at once took refuge in the cathedral, where the bishop received him, and where he would at least be safe overnight.

His arrival had been noted. At dawn a regiment commanded by Heraclian surrounded the church, and that officer knocked at the door. The bishop admitted him. Heraclian presented a decree signed by the Emperor, ordering Stilicho's arrest. He was to surrender to the bearer, and his safety was guaranteed.

In spite of the supplication of his friends, who suspected a trap, the Vandal obeyed his master's command. Thrusting aside those who sought to detain him, he crossed the threshold. The legionaries closed around him; he was a prisoner. It had passed off more easily than one might have expected, reflected Heraclian. To think of so great a warrior letting himself be snared like a booby!

Stilicho asked where he was to be taken. Not very far, the officer replied with seeming courtesy, and then drew from his corselet a second imperial order that ordered him to slay the Vandal with his own hand once he had been arrested.

Hearing him read it, the Barbarian officers rushed to cover their general with their bodies. There were German horsemen in the city, they told him. It would only be necessary to give the alarm, and they would hasten to defend him to the death.

But in that stern voice with which he was wont to censure infractions of discipline, Stilicho ordered them to sheathe their swords, and then knelt before Heraclian, who cut off his head.

A few days later Alaric learned of the Vandal's unflinching end. He had the news from the Germanic horsemen who, after their general's assassination, left the Roman standard by thousands to join the ranks of the Goths.

## X: ON THE ROAD TO ROME

THE hour the Balthung has so long awaited strikes at last. The sole adversary whom he feared is dead, his best soldiers have swelled his own forces. The moment has come to show the empire that he alone is capable of taking Stilicho's place.

He dictates a letter to his secretary in which he demands the four thousand pounds of gold the empire has agreed to pay for the equipment of his troops. He asks for orders, calling attention to the fact that his army is ready to march against whatever enemy Rome will point out, and engaging to crush all adversaries against whom he may be pitted.

Already he is hardly able to restrain his soldiers' impatience: they have been promised a war, and a war they must have. Whether they fight in Constantinople, in Gaul, Spain, England or Rome — if needs be — it is essential that their desire for conquest find an object. The losses entailed by the invasion of Italy, the battle of Pollentia and the retreat, have been made good by an incessant influx of Barbarian horsemen, come to take service under the King of the Goths. Everything is in readiness. The horses are fat, their hides glisten. There are mountains of arrows piled up in the magazines, and arms are so plentiful that every soldier can select the individual sword or battle-axe that best suits him.

The whole Roman policy does its best blindly to encourage the reinforcement of Alaric's army. Stilicho's assassination brings the German auxiliaries, irritated

by their master's death and eager to avenge him, to his standard. And not alone soldiers hasten to enroll; fugitives, deserters and even generals, driven out by a religious persecution that now excludes pagans and heretics from military command, hasten to the Gothic camp. Those who refuse to exchange Thor's hammer for the Cross, like old Gengeridus, see themselves forced to lay aside their baldricks.

Rome does not understand the psychology of these Germans, who must have a chief. It is useless to suggest that Turpilio, Vigilantius or Varanes take the place of Stilicho. They will not obey courtiers and generals of the imperial antechamber. Like some great tidal wave the famous minister's death sweeps out all the functionaries he had placed in military and civil positions — the *magister militum*, the master of the offices, the major-domo of the palace; and a new wave, that of the new minister, sweeps new prefects and generals into the vacant charges.

No matter against which adversary Alaric may lead his army, that army has been augmented by intrepid and well-trained soldiers, and generals experienced in the art of war. He is already entering into possession of part of Stilicho's legacy, the devotion of loyal officers thrown out of employment, and of their urge to admire, to serve, to sacrifice themselves. All that he lacks is the official rank the Vandal possessed. The day that Rome bestows it on him the entire army will be at his disposal.

Why does the Emperor persist in refusing to pay the four thousand pounds of gold, and make him wait so long for the order to tear the ill-worn purple with which the rebel Constantine has adorned himself from his

shoulders? When he passes the lines of tents and wagons, impatient voices call out to him, adding the weight of their desire to his own. The horses, fed on oats, are exasperated at being tied to the post, they stamp their hoofs, shake their manes and neigh, excited by the presence of the enemy and their need of exercise.

Why is he waiting? query the chiefs of the clans, and the Frankish and Sarmatian officers who have joined him in anticipation of action and battle.

He is waiting only until the Emperor's caprice crystallizes the Goth's unused vigor and bravery in a definite objective. It is then that his old counsellors remind him that nothing can be gotten from the Roman unless one comes to take it, sword in hand. If he had not dared, one day, to march to Constantinople, the wretched Goths would have stayed in Moesia, amid their barren vegetable gardens and fields of tumbleweeds. Some one, more prudent, replies that the first expedition meant to wrest a command from Rome had ended in defeat and rout. Yes, but it was because at that time Stilicho was alive and the Roman army large and powerful. Some of the officers who had served in its ranks were now commanding bodies of Alaric's cavalry. Others, deprived of their rank by the sectarian laws, had been exiled to the provinces. And, finally, Stilicho was dead.

While the members of Alaric's council weighed the relative advantages of audacity and prudence, Alaric decides to try Fortune once more. The place the Vandal has occupied is empty for the nonce. In all the Latin world there is but one man capable of filling it. To whom could the command-in-chief of the army be



given if not to Alaric who, in exchange for this title, would lend the empire the support of his military genius and bravery, and assure it the assistance of a numerous and well-trained army?

So long as he remains away from court his demands will be made in vain. They will be drowned by the solicitations of generals who, never leaving the imperial antechamber, let others pluck laurels for them on the field of battle. The claims of those who fear to lose all their standing if the Emperor's glance does not always discover them when he passes, are too insistent. The appetite of the intriguers who sleep in palace corridors and courts, in order to receive the largesse of august favor at every passing hour is too insatiable to consider the offers made by a Barbarian general — a Gothic general — merely one more Barbarian — encamped in Epirus — so far from Rome — who presumes to force on the empire an assistance he has not been asked to give. If he wishes a command, then let him come and seek it where all charges and offices are bestowed — at court; and let him beware, above all, of being too brave, too talented or too honest.

He will go to Rome. But not as a modest office seeker and courtier, not to swell the number of parasites who encumber the palace galleries and quarrel bitterly among themselves as to who shall enjoy positions and ratings. He will make his magnificent army deploy before the walls of Ravenna — where dwells the Emperor — before Rome, the city wherein the Senate sits. He will obey the oracle's command; he must go to Rome to take possession of the power Fate holds in store for him. He will show them his splendidly armed squadrons, swift in attack, skilled in maneuvering; with their glit-

tering lances, their multicolored standards, a force champing at the bit, eager to annihilate the enemies of the empire, an army comparable to that possessed by the great emperors of yore. Will they be able to deny him the rank of *magister militum* when they behold these rigorously disciplined regiments, combining Germanic impetuosity, the impetuosity of the German with the Latin's sense of order, perform their evolutions at his command?

But this time Alaric will not repeat the mistake that led to his defeat at Pollentia. It shall no longer be a horde that follows in his train, its march retarded by heavy wagons, and encumbered with useless mouths to feed. He will leave behind in Epirus, with a few regiments to guard them, the whole paraphernalia that accompanies Barbarian chieftains, the multitude of women and children that embarrasses and slows an army's progress. He will take with him only soldiers, the Goths of his own nation, their associates from the Rhine and the Danube, and the thirty thousand auxiliaries once in Stilicho's service who have deserted the Roman eagles to fight in the ranks of their blood brethren.

This first departure from Barbarian tradition will assure him a rapidity and a mobility denied peoples who carry with them their families and household goods. True, he will have at his disposal an army less numerous than the one that formerly accompanied him to Italy—it comprises no more than from fifty to a hundred thousand men—but it will be made up of picked troops, well-equipped veteran fighters. The corselets forged in the imperial arsenals, the helmets adorned with plumes and aigrettes, the new swords,

the quivers overflowing with arrows, make these squadrons look like imperial regulars; but instead of eagles, the animal figures dear to nomad hearts — wolves, bears, horses and bulls — adorn their ensigns. And some even display the Runic characters and dragons' heads venerated by Scandinavians.

In order still further to increase the number of his soldiers, Alaric sends his brother-in-law Athäulf on a recruiting mission to the riverine lands of the Danube, to enlist the Pannonian Goths, hitherto rebels against the Balthung's authority, and to the marshes of the nomad Huns, who ride on marauding raids as chance may decree, while awaiting the chief who will restore the olden Asiatic empire whence they have been driven. Athäulf is to bring back with him all the Barbarians he can enroll, and rejoin the main army at Verona.

The year 408 draws to a close. In the month of December, while snows cover the Julian Alps, Alaric enters its defiles. The Emperor's silence justifies his departure from Epirus, and authorizes him to come and seek a reply that has not been vouchsafed him.

He crosses hills and rivers, and the Roman advance posts do not attempt to stop him. The garrisons of the cities before which he passes content themselves with closing their gates. He does not stop to besiege them. His admirably drilled squadrons, marvellously well disciplined, do not delay to pillage.

Too weak to bar his way, Aquileia, on the defensive, is satisfied to observe his movements. The whole Roman army is massed around Ravenna. No obstacle hinders the advance of the Goths. Why should they lose time battering the walls of Concordia, Altinum or Cremona?

The inhabitants of Rimini who attempt to bar his road are routed by his advance guard alone.

This countryside that, only a few years ago, had rejoiced in the Barbarians' disastrous retreat, now sees them return in greater numbers and strength, swift and mobile, rid of their dragging wagon train.

Alaric thinks this lack of resistance hides a trap of some kind. It would have been easy to beat him while he was traversing the Alps, it would be still easier to beat him when his Goths plunge into the narrow valleys of the Apennines, cross the steep passes, climb the peaks and wind along precipices and mountain torrents. One regiment of good soldiers would be enough to prevent access to the pass formerly cut by Vespasian and leading into Etruria.

Alaric retards his march, he advances circumspectly, fearing to lead his army into the ambushade every seeming sign of defense leads him to suspect. It is certain that he has only been permitted to come thus far in order that he may be crushed at leisure in some defile. He rides at a gallop in advance of the van.

He dismounts, he inspects the passes he suspects — not a Roman soldier is to be seen. The trap is well concealed. He scales one of the highest peaks, whence the eye can view practically the whole range, with the roads meandering along the mountain sides, and the white torrents leaping down into the bottom of the gorges. In this country outspread before him, with its valleys and mountain tops, he can see nothing of the troops massed in the hollows, the stragglers trailing along the highroads, that he had expected to find. He cannot credit his good fortune. Is it possible that a general would overlook so good a chance to stop his

advance? And then he realizes that Rome is afraid, that all the forces at her disposal are gathered around the Emperor and the Senate, abandoning the remainder of Italy to the invaders.

Alaric is uplifted by a measureless joy. The country before him, as far as eye can reach, is already conquered. He can dictate his own conditions, assert his claim to be made *magister militum*, and rule the stupid Emperor, his incapable ministers, his cowardly courtiers, as he sees fit. He utters a sonorous, enthusiastic cry, that echo repeats a thousandfold, and, carried away by the exaltation of their chief, the Goths who hear it hail him with clamors that the rocks fling back and send rolling into the bottom of the dark abysses together with the uproar of the foaming torrents.

Lances are upthrust, standards toss, the beasts and monsters they show come to life. Alaric returns from his reconnaissance. A curt command, and the horses take the narrow path, wedged between mountain and precipice, at a trot.

In imagination the Goths are already the masters of Rome, of this city so rich that the tale of its wealth seems a fairy tale. Every land in the world has contributed to this magnificence. The senatorial palace overflows with precious objects. As early as Pliny's day the strong-box of a mere individual contained more money than Carthage surrendered to Scipio. Gold is so common that it fails to be noticed. Carriages of solid silver, drawn by steeds in gold harness, roll through the streets. The inhabitants go clad in silk and purple, they drink from goblets of tinkling crystal and translucent porcelain. They are fantastically extravagant with regard to their food, eating only the choicest of birds,



and fish obtained at vast expense from the ends of the earth. The houses are adorned with life-size statues of gold, the temples of the ancient gods are as rich as the shrine of Eleusis, and in the churches are holy vessels incrusting with diamonds and carbuncles, vestments woven of cloth of gold, diadems of pearls and rubies.

Alaric spares no thought for gold or precious stuffs. He is already counting the steps that lead to the Capitol, the triumphal arches, the vaulted basilicas, the marble statues of the emperors, the inscriptions commemorating Caesar and Titus, bronze busts of Cato with his rude, stern head, of Brutus with his harsh features. . . . His ambition has changed face. The hand that struck down Stilicho and abased the empire is that of a god stronger than all the other gods, that of the Fate which, in the course of centuries, at times selects a man to carry out its purposes. Can it be the ancient founder of his race, the god Balder, who guides him toward immortal glory?

This soul whose transit from the Germanic myths to the Christian faith has been all too sudden, this soul that fluctuates between orthodoxy and Arianism, is stirred by its old religious questionings. It wants some supernatural confirmation of its mission, besides the equivocal prophecy that promised him the city, but allowed him to be beaten near Urbs. Alaric has not stopped since he entered Italy, so great has been the drawing power of his fascination for Rome, but he wishes to take advantage of his passage through Etruria to question certain Tuscans said to be adepts in the magic art. The most famous dwelt in Narnia, where he means to interrogate them. Narnia, however, shuts her gates in

all haste: perched on the summit of an inaccessible crag, she is well able to sustain a siege.

One winter evening, amid gusts of wind and snow, Alaric contemplates the rock — crowned with walls and towers. Narnia occupies a position of great strategic importance. He will capture it, will consult the sorcerers. At his command the Goths are already escalading the rocks by hundreds. Suddenly they disperse in terror: claps of thunder reëcho amid the precipices, livid lightnings show the profile of houses and towers against the dark background of the sky. The thousand voices of the tempest howl in the stony amphitheatre, hail rattles, and the flashes of lightning cut deep furrows in the rock with their long, glittering blades.

The Goths, who in common with all nomads dread a storm, like the Mongols of Genghis Khan at a later date, who took refuge in the water when it thundered, like Attila's Huns, like the Teutons who feared only "the falling of the skies," scatter in disorder. One should not oppose the supernatural powers. Alaric spares the town whose sorcerers defend it with such terrible weapons. He will carry on without their prophecies. Does he really need them? The oracle of the Thessalian forest is enough to sustain his hope, to encourage his ambition: "You will penetrate to Rome."

What more does a Balthung who dreams of brandishing Rome in his fist like a sword, need on a march of world conquest?

## XI: ALARICUS AD PORTAS

THE greater part of the imperial army having been concentrated around Ravenna, the Roman population had to provide for its own defence. The burghers and artisans were called to arms, and feverish preparations were made to repel the invaders, without knowing just who they might be. Some declared that Stilicho was not dead, and that he was leading a large army toward Rome. When it became known that these Barbarians were Alaric's Goths, the negotiations between the Goth and the Vandal were remembered, and those among the latter's friends who had been spared were put to death. Accused of treason by her charge, Galla Placidia — the daughter of Theodosius, who from childhood had hated the woman to whom her father had entrusted her — Serena, Stilicho's widow, was sentenced by the Senate and strangled.

Alaric did not wish to take Rome by brute force, as Radagaisus, for instance, would have done; he hoped she would yield herself to him, recognize him as her chief. His attitude toward the empire was unchanged. He offered his services, but was prepared to impose them if necessary.

He wanted to be Rome's master, not her destroyer. He might have swept away without trouble the militia-men who strutted along her ramparts: these soldiers of a day could have offered but a feeble and awkward defence. But he was content to occupy Ostia, blockade

the mouth of the Tiber and encamp before the walls. Not having foreseen this siege, Rome had naturally neglected to lay in provisions, or had else thought of doing so when it was too late.

The Goths, more circumspect, had at once laid hand on all the grain boats coming from Africa, the annual provision fleet whose arrival was so impatiently expected throughout Italy that the least delay in its coming evoked the sinister spectre of famine and caused revolutions. Alaric knew how to compel the Senate to treat. Robbed of her chance to revictual herself, exposed to the attack of a seemingly numberless host of Barbarians, Rome would soon ask for peace. To surround the city so narrowly that not a single mule loaded with flour could enter, would be enough to force her to capitulate.

While a cordon of sentinels watched every road leading to the gates, detachments of cavalry galloped ceaselessly around the walls, and any poor wretch who might have risked getting in or out of the city would at once have been transfixed by an arrow.

All that was necessary was to let the Romans grow more ravenously hungry, and curse the Emperor who delivered them over to the mercy of the Goths without military aid. The anguish of having to defend so vast a stretch of walls — more than fourteen thousand, two hundred and thirteen yards — with the feeble home guards available, the nights when the slightest noise roused the sentinels and spread the rumor of a Barbarian assault throughout the city, the anxiety that helped undermine bodies exhausted by hunger, would deliver Rome into his hands more surely than if he scaled her ramparts and battered in her gates. Lacking

food, lacking soldiers, she would be forced, one day or another, to surrender at discretion.

Ravenna had turned a deaf ear to all her demands for assistance. Olympius had no intention of withdrawing troops from the stronghold in which the Emperor, the Government and the great families of Rome had taken refuge. So the home guards were stationed on the towers and the patrol-ways of the Aurelian Wall, in the hope that these powerful ramparts, repaired and strengthened some years before, would guard the city against the assault of the Barbarians. Since Brennus had taken it by storm, the city of Romulus had lost its old reputation for impregnability. According to the sombre predictions of the soothsayers, the time of her fall, announced by the prophetic ravens who enumerate the passing centuries, was at hand. Fateful omens appeared in the skies, but the most alarming signs of imminent defeat were the famished crowds that besieged the grain magazines, and the emaciated corpses covering the ground.

In spite of the charity of Loeta, the Emperor Gratian's widow, and of her mother, who opened the doors of their storehouses and their coffers to the people, the famine every day grew more acute. The wheat ration, cut to a half, then a third, and finally a fifth its normal size, shrank almost to nothingness. Many died of starvation and disease, and since the corpses could not be taken to the cemeteries lying outside the walls, they were left on the street corners or in the public squares, and soon a nauseating stench invaded every quarter of the city. In spite of her extent, Rome at that time had a population greatly out of proportion to her size. The *domus* was the type of large private dwelling, and was



represented by 1,790 examples. The *insulae* — of which there were some 46,602 — were tenements, into which a population of a million five hundred thousand inhabitants was jammed.

Exasperated by hunger, the population reproached Hilarius, the prefect of Rome, with his remissness in provisioning the city — and tore him to pieces. His successor, Pompeianus, was in no better position to feed the poor wretches, but he informed the Senate of a proposal that, even if it promised no very satisfactory results, would at least distract the mind of the populace.

He had, so he said, been visited by two Etruscan sorcerers who boasted that their magic arts had saved the city of Narnia at the very moment the Goths were about to capture it. They claimed that they had raised the frightful tempest that had so terrified the assailants, and offered to repeat their magic operations to rid Rome of the Barbarians.

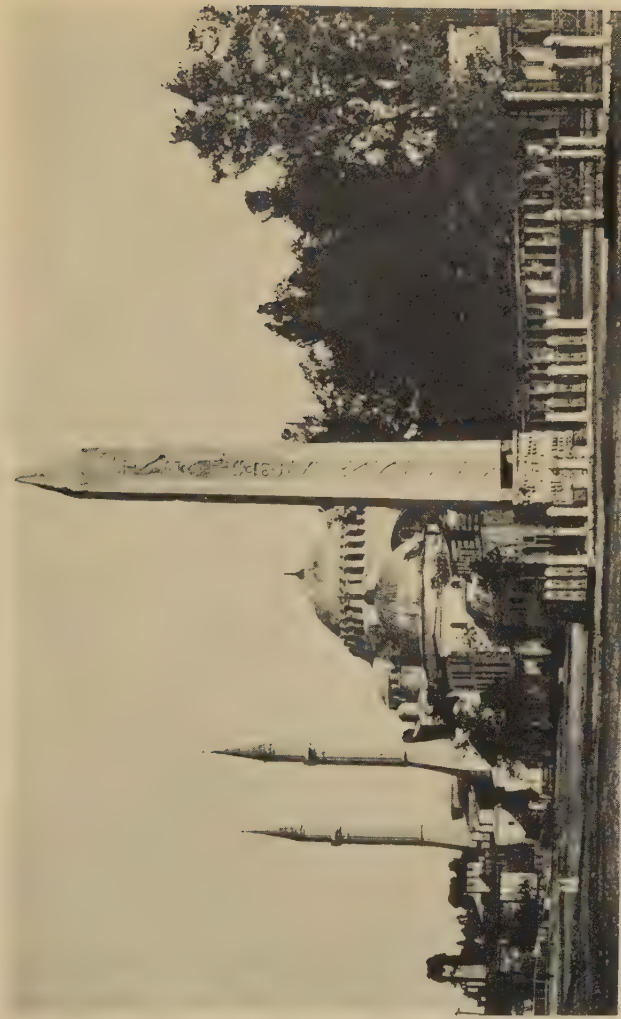
Pompeianus transmitted this offer to the Senate with a request that it be kept secret, but it was soon all over town. Though it was dangerous to rouse religious animosities among a sick and starving people ever ready to explode, Rome was soon divided into two parties — those who objected to occult practices and feared the rebirth of paganism, and those — far more numerous — who were perfectly willing to assure their safety at the price of some magic conjurations. These last, needless to state, included the pagans, heretics, sceptics, and even some Christians whose fervent faith had been dampened by starvation.

What did the sorcerers demand? That sacrifices be offered in all the city squares, especially on the Capitoline Hill, in the *Forum Boarium* and the Forum of

Trajan. But to make the sacrifices effective, the entire Senate would have to be present at them in a body. The remembrance of recent persecutions made even the most daring pagans hesitate, and they did not dare to encourage the Etruscan warlocks' demands too openly. In order to protect itself by the fiat of an authority none could question, the Senate appealed to Pope Innocent I. But His Holiness evasively replied that he could authorize no pagan ceremonies, yet that he would not expressly forbid them, if they alone were able to save the city. No doubt he placed little confidence in the sorcerers' arts — in case their proposals were accepted — and counted upon their discomfiture to put a finishing touch to paganism's disrepute.

For the worshippers of the old gods were becoming aggressive. It was said that the death of Serena had been foretold to her by a Vestal virgin some years before, when Stilicho's wife had torn a necklace from the goddess's image, to wear it herself. "It was Vesta's necklace that strangled Serena," everybody murmured, and all the ancient fables regarding the power of the gods were bandied from mouth to mouth. The sceptics, perhaps more numerous than the professing Christians and case-hardened pagans, sneered and said it would be better to entrust the defence of the city to a good general than to gods too distant or too preoccupied to bother with it. Nevertheless, they agreed to the sacrifices. After all, one never knows!

Possibly Roman public opinion was naïve enough to think that the publicity given the sorcerers would suffice to intimidate the Goths and make them raise the siege before the breaking of the tempest that had so terrified them at Narnia.



The Obelisk of Theodosius at Constantinople  
(The base commemorates the submission of the Goths)



Whatever might have been the result of the magic invocations — whether or no they were carried out — they made no difference in the attitude of the besiegers and in no way diminished the rigors of the blockade.

The Christians then suggested public prayers in the churches, processional, and penitential and propitiatory observances. These had no better success.

Every one was weary of eating vermin, and of watching the Gothic horsemen parade before the gates, coarsely hailing the sentinels and inviting them to leave their holes and come out and fight like men in the open — though a sally on the part of these untrained home guards would have been madness — and of waiting, day by day, for the army Ravenna did not send to their relief. So the suggestions of the sceptics who said that since the gods took no interest in their situation it might be well to see what could be done with men, the Senate decided to send an ambassador to Alaric to negotiate a peace.

The greatest personages of the empire, the *illustrissimi*, having all taken refuge in Ravenna, two men among the *spectabiles* were chosen in view of the high positions they occupied, the chief of the notaries, Johannes, and a Spaniard named Basilius.

The ambassadors were somewhat disturbed when they penetrated into the camp of the Goths. It was the hour when the Barbarians cooked their dinners, and the odor of frying meat troubled the starving men. In a spirit of mockery the soldiers offered them wheaten cakes and slices of roast beef at the point of the sword. The Romans raised their eyebrows with dignified severity, and lifting their togas with disgust lest they soil them in the mud of the camp, they passed with haughty



and contemptuous mien between the line of tents and fires. A Gothic officer came to meet them and conducted them to Alaric's pavilion.

There they saw a man still quite young and vigorous, clear-skinned and fair-haired, in an ivory chair that, aforesaid, must have adorned the dwelling of some wealthy Greek. They noted with surprise that he did not wear the furs that identified a Barbarian in Roman eyes, but was clad in the uniform of a Roman general, with plumed helmet, purple mantle and a richly ornamented corselet. Instead of the short Roman broadsword, however, he had a long sword whose hilt was encrusted with gold and silver.

Surprised to find this Barbarian attractive, smiling, and so different from the hairy monster they had imagined, they regained their arrogance as their fears diminished.

Had they seen him in the midst of his hairy old giants, himself resembling some legendary ogre garbed in fantastic vestments, they would have stammered supplications. Seeing that the Goth did not threaten them and bespoke them gently, however, they took another tone.

The Senate had sent them, so they said, to enjoin Alaric to leave Italy and return without delay to the province assigned him, else he would be considered a rebel and severely punished.

The Balthung burst out laughing, at which the indignant chief of the notaries declared that the Roman soldiery was innumerable. "All the better," said Alaric, "the thicker the wheat, the easier to cut."

It was an old saw, often quoted by the Barbarians, but the Romans heard it for the first time, and its

jovially alarming imagery petrified them with terror. Alaric, seeing them turn pale, enjoyed the effect his cruel pleasantry had produced. He had not the slightest intention of massacring the inhabitants of Rome, but he had purposely flung them the proverb, knowing that it would dismay the ambassadors more than any threat. Johannes and Basilius grew less arrogant. The Goth's clear, straightforward gaze disconcerted them. It disarranged, before they were spoken, the fine rhetorical phrases they had so carefully prepared. In their mind's eye they now saw a tremendous scythe, wielded by a Barbarian hand, cutting down the poor Roman home guards like grass. They would have liked to make a lofty and arrogant reply, but could only stammer vague nothings. Then the Goth, who would have spared their susceptibilities had they conducted themselves with courteous modesty, decided to punish their presumption.

What will he want, to raise the siege? Gold, of course. Five thousand pounds of gold. More than thirty thousand pounds of silver. His eyes dwelt with pleasure on the ambassadors' handsome robes. Why should not the Goths go dressed equally well? Four thousand silk robes. And these senatorial *laticlavæ*, with broad stripes running down the front. How striking their purple! His soldiers would like it. Three thousand pieces of scarlet. And those spices his men appreciate so, and that make so tasty a seasoning for their roast meat. The Romans will be glad to let him have — let us see — three thousand pounds of pepper.

The inhabitants will also give up, as a matter of course, their costly furniture, their ivory couches and gold and silver tables. And surely they will free their

told all over town that the Barbarian had an innumerable army, in the best of shape and equipped in the Roman style.

Satisfied with the rich tribute in which they had shared, the Goths were kind to the vanquished. All in all, in spite of their tallness and their tawny hair, these people were no more repellent than others. They were not nearly so ugly as the Asiatics who had ridden past Rome after their victory over Radagaisus, those stinking Huns, with their wrinkled yellow faces, squint-eyes and flat noses.

Alaric personally received Romans of distinction. He excused himself for having inflicted useless suffering on the citizens of Rome. It was all due to a misunderstanding, he declared, that might easily have been avoided had the agreement proposed by him been at once accepted. He was grieved that he should be considered an enemy of Rome. On the contrary, what he most wished was an alliance, and the rank that would allow him to offer the empire the support of his army. And then he showed his visitors his squadrons maneuvering on the plain.

The Romans at times felt a trifle bitter when they recognized their own furniture in some Barbarian horseman's tent, when they saw these soldiers strutting about in the silken and purple tunics they had been forced to deliver, or when they tasted the pepper with which the Goths seasoned the meats they served them. God knows they had been put to enough trouble to satisfy the Goths' insatiable appetite for spices!

When he had amply gratified the hunger of the besieged, and let them admire the splendid order of his camp, Alaric thought that his presence before the walls

of Rome might be offensive to the self-esteem of its inhabitants, and calculated to nourish their rancor against the man who had beaten them. Anxious to humor their susceptibility and avoid any indiscreet appearance of constraint, he left even before the ransom had been entirely paid. He was still to receive a large amount of gold and silver, a large quantity of stuffs and pepper; above all, the hostages that he had demanded as a guarantee that the treaty would be carried out; and, finally, the Emperor's ratification.

He led his army into Etruria, to the great joy of the Romans, delighted to find the Gothic tents no longer obstructing the beautiful view of the *campagna* and the Sabine Hills. Alaric's triumph was assured. All that remained was to obtain from Honorius the insignia of a *magister militum*, representing the consecration of his fame and his Romanism, and an order to lead the imperial eagles to fresh victories.

The court at Ravenna was dumbfounded to learn that Alaric had raised the siege when he might so easily have taken Rome. His weakness, and the capricious inconsequence of the Barbarians, who took so much pains to besiege a city and then sacrificed the fruit of their efforts on the very eve of triumph, were condemned. No one in the empire understood Alaric's psychology, the Emperor least of all. Used to the short, brutal nomad incursions of the Barbarians, the Romans never dreamt that a German chief cherished anything but a love of pillage in his soul. They did not realize the loyalty of those who served them, men like Stilicho, Fravitta, Merobande — the superstitious admiration, the fervor the ancient name Rome roused in them. They were incapable of imagining all that the word

meant to these "Barbarians," who worshipped power, strength and glory, for it was a sentiment they themselves no longer felt. In spite of the decline of the empire, Rome remained Rome to the German chiefs, that is to say, a centuried past of victory, grandeur and heroism. Behind the weakling Honorius they always saw the shadow of Caesar.

Like them, Alaric coveted the honor of serving the Roman empire, yet since his ambition was far greater than that of other chiefs, he was not satisfied with a modest military rank. He was aware of his genius, and, naturally, if he was to share in the destinies of Rome, it should be in the proper capacity. He wished to serve the empire on condition that he be its master. To such a degree was his personal ambition merged with his faith in the grandeur and permanence of Rome. How could he better support Roman glory than by providing her with a worthy master?

It may be that Olympius divined the Balthung's intentions, for he dissuaded the Emperor Honorius from accepting his offer. Instead of sending him to fight Constantine, he induced the Emperor to treat with the rebel Constantine, and even to divide the empire with him. Honorius followed his advice. He offered to call Constantine brother and Augustus, on condition that he hasten to crush Alaric. This proposal would have resulted in bringing to Italy the man who had already annihilated the Roman power in Gaul, Spain and Britain. Honorius did, however, ratify the treaty made by the Senate, but was fully resolved not to carry out its clauses if Fortune favored him.

The army led by Alaric's brother-in-law, Athäulf, had been unable to effect its junction with the main body of



the Gothic army at the date fixed. Athäulf was to have rejoined it before Rome. But the garrison of Ravenna, reinforced by Hunnish cavalry in the pay of the empire, had stopped him, forced him to fight, and obliged him to make a long detour in order to reach Etruria. This mediocre victory was regarded as a triumph in Ravenna, and encouraged the Emperor to reject the supplications of the Romans, anxious to be definitely delivered from the Gothic menace. Honorius was awaiting five legions that were to arrive from Dalmatia, and the reinforcements the rebel Constantine was to lead to Italy in person.

At the same time that he learned of the ratification of the treaty, Alaric was informed by his spies of the secret agreements that Honorius and Constantine had entered into, and of the imminent arrival of the Dalmatian legions. Yet though the Emperor did not keep his word, he himself meant to observe the treaty, at least until the perfidy of the court at Ravenna was proven. It was, unfortunately, hard to keep the Gothic army in hand and, above all, the reinforcements represented by the liberated Roman slaves. These last were impatient to return to Rome in order to revenge themselves on their former masters, and their descriptions of the city's wealth and women excited the Barbarians' cupidity. In spite of the strict discipline Alaric imposed upon the army, he could not prevent his horsemen from sallying out in small parties, to pillage the villages and plunder up to the very Aurelian Wall.

The Senate begged the king to leave Italy, now that the peace treaty had been signed. Alaric, for his part, insisted on first receiving the arrears of tribute due him,

and on the delivery of the hostages the Emperor had promised. He would not go, so he declared, until his claims were met. Then the Senate sent messages to Ravenna, imploring the Emperor to carry out the treaty conditions, so that they might be rid of the invaders. "Do nothing at all," said Olympius. "When we have the Dalmatian legions and Constantine's army, I will get rid of the Goths myself." For, ever since he had taken part in the battle against Athäulf, Olympius considered himself a great captain.

So Ravenna turned a deaf ear to the demands of Alaric and the supplications of the Senate. The court thought that all that was needed was to gain time.

But Alaric, who with considerable difficulty had induced his soldiers to give up the sack of Rome and content themselves with the half-paid tribute, was equally apprehensive of a revolt on the part of his army, bored by its Etrurian inaction, and of a surprise attack by the Roman forces, supported by Constantine's contingents. Yet if the Ravenna diplomats did not understand what he had in mind, neither did the Gothic chiefs. Had it not been for their loyalty to him as a Balthung and their king, they would have murmured and plotted and, perhaps, have tried to overthrow him. Unable to explain his true objectives to them, he reiterated the promises he had made before. When the Thing, periodically assembled, showed too much impatience and irritation, Alaric dazzled his rude Barbarians with vague and fanciful descriptions of a mysterious future. Nevertheless, something more than promises was necessary to assuage the soldiers' greed, and it was essential that the empire pay its ransom in full at the earliest possible moment. As to the hostages,

Alaric would not credit the Emperor's good faith until he had received them.

Entrenched in impregnable Ravenna, his enemy's anger did not alarm Honorius. Even admitting that Alaric might besiege the city, its garrison could hold out long enough for Constantine's army to arrive. And incidentally, it was more likely that the Goth would once more turn against Rome. And that did not trouble the Emperor at all. He had named one of his hens "Rome," and was far more interested in the welfare of this fowl than in that of the city.

Couriers galloped from Alaric's camp to Rome, and from Rome to Ravenna. And as the Goth's demands took on a more imperious tone, the Senate deluged the Emperor with its lamentations. But its ambassadors were never received by Honorius. Olympius, who guarded his master's door, greeted them with a thousand courtesies. They were overwhelmed with gifts, sumptuous banquets, spectacles, games and reviews were instituted in their honor, *amphorae* of the rarest vintage wines were opened for their benefit, and they were sent back dazed with compliments, as well as a little drunken, but without having received any satisfaction.

The raiding expeditions of the Goths grew in number. The roads were no longer safe, and hardly any one dared leave the city of Rome. Alaric, who had severely punished his soldiers' misdeeds, after the signature of the peace treaty, now seemed to tolerate their depredations. He could only avoid discontent and possible revolt by pretending to ignore them. In order to compel their obedience this relaxation of discipline had to be overlooked, and they had to be allowed a "safety-valve."

The Romans, terrified, decided to send a new embassy to Honorius. This time a functionary named Maximilianus, a Romanized Greek, famous for his energy, Priscus Attalus, whose skillful eloquence and powers of persuasion were highly vaunted, and Cecilianus, former Vicar of Africa, where he had known St. Augustine, an honest and loyal man and a friend of Olympius, were chosen. It was hoped that Cecilianus's intervention, in particular, would make the minister abandon all resistance. They three set out for Ravenna with their minds made up to have their way. Provided with a safeguard by Alaric, they were able to traverse the countryside infested by Gothic raiders without molestation.

The arrival of the senatorial messengers provided a distraction for the court at Ravenna, as well as an opportunity of jeering at the Romans. After having been saluted and embraced, they were asked to tell all the news about "our dear friends, the Senators," whether they had had a pleasant trip, and whether their pockets had been picked by the Goths on the way. They were conducted to soft couches so that they might repose after the fatigue of travel. When they awoke, they were led to tables covered with rare and savory dishes, their health was drunk, and, since it would have been bad form to talk business in the middle of a meal, they had to wait for an audience with the Emperor.

Cecilianus, Attalus and Maximilianus were dined and fêted for several days. Then Honorius sent for Cecilianus and informed him that he had been raised to the rank of prefect of the Praetorium, an office that would oblige him to reside in Ravenna. The next day Attalus,

sent for in turn, learned that in view of his merits, he had been appointed superintendent of church donations. Won over by this liberality, neither the one nor the other dared disoblige the Emperor by mentioning Alaric's name. As for Maximilianus, the Emperor had him mount and ride out to inspect the five legions just arrived from Dalmatia. "One does not submit to the caprices of a Goth when one has an army like this," said he, and Maximilianus agreed. In an excess of generosity Honorius added that, since Rome trembled for her safety, he would send her these magnificent regiments.

The ambassadors could not thank him enough. Cecilianus, who was to remain in Ravenna, bade them adieu. The Emperor accompanied Maximilianus and Attalus to the palace gate; before they left he once more wished to see the legions that would escort them to Rome, under command of Valens, their general. The envoys of the Senate bowed low, kissed the hand he gave them and departed, escorted by the infantry, marching in good order, and with a superbly martial air.



## XII: NETS OF INTRIGUE

THE delays of the court at Ravenna in carrying out the agreements entered into by the Senate at last began to worry Alaric. He could not explain to his satisfaction the Emperor's obstinacy in refusing him his due. Had not a number of Barbarians before him obtained the military command he now sought? The Vandal Stilicho was no less a "Barbarian" than the Goth Alaric, and yet he had been the idol of Rome.

There is in the fate of nations an unknown quantity that eludes our analysis. Honorius was a mediocre sovereign in every sense of the word, yet he always displayed toward Alaric an inexplicable and unexplained hostility, one incapable of justification by the anti-Barbarian league that had brought about Stilicho's fall. All too ready to open his gates to the stranger, the Emperor willfully shut them in Alaric's face. Perhaps he was vaguely apprised by his unconscious racial instinct of the danger the Balthung chief represented for the equilibrium of the Latin world. Had he yielded to his demands, had he handed over to him the powers of a *magister militum*, into what adventures might he not have been drawn?

Those "memoirs," "journals," and "interviews" that inform us with regard to the plans and intentions of modern statesmen, are lacking with regard to Alaric, and their lack is regrettable. We possess none of those confidences to which a leader abandons himself in his

moments of exaltation or of despair, and which are so many impartial testimonies throwing light on a man's soul. All the historians of his time who have discussed Alaric were members of enemy peoples, and not one among them has taken the trouble to give us a glimpse of the Goth's soul, to explain *from within* the meaning of his actions. All are contradictory with regard to events, dates and figures; not one of them deals with the subject of the conqueror's inner life, his moral and intellectual motivation. Perhaps, at that period, they themselves did not know them, and saw in Alaric only the conventionalized image of the hostile and devastating Barbarian.

Yet, however incapable the multitude may be with regard to *understanding* a great man, it nevertheless instinctively senses the presence of some extraordinary destiny, the announcement of a prodigious future. This same instinct that, no doubt, induced the Goths to follow Alaric, and that preserved their faith and enthusiasm — they would never in the case of another chief have put up with such severe discipline, denials and indifference to immediate success — made the Romans mistrust so dangerous an associate. With him to lead them, the Goths longed for a victorious raid across the world at large, but the Latin people, for their part, had no desire to be taken up behind on this gigantic charger and whirled away into adventures unforeseen. Rome refused the new glories Alaric meant to add to the empire's ancient ones. It had no craving for the magnificent conquests he promised. With the whole weight of its inertia, of its renunciation of future triumphs, with all its hostility toward the man who was trying to compel it to heroic action, the empire opposed the most dis-

dainful indifference to all Alaric's incentives. It did not know exactly where this man meant to lead it, but its misgivings were sufficient to make it reject with all the strength of its weakness any participation in the glory he offered.

While Alaric was impatient to chastise the empire's vile cowardice with the lash and the flat of the sword, in order to reawaken its old desire for conquest, the diplomats of Ravenna were maneuvering to dupe him. They did not dare openly refuse to carry out the treaty, but all their putting off was only meant to keep him inactive until the moment when Constantine's army, arriving from Gaul, would attack him in the rear, while the troops at Ravenna and the garrison of Rome, reinforced by the Dalmatian legions, would surround him.

The presence of these legions disturbed the Balthung. Perhaps they were merely the vanguard of a numerous army sent against him by the Emperor of the Orient. Since his soldiers were weary of inaction, and insisted on being used in a manner comporting with their martial courage, why should he not abandon to them these Dalmatian legionaries whom the Emperor had undoubtedly sent into his territory to defy him, and to show a strength that would allow him to dispense with the Goths? A few squadrons would be enough to put the legions to flight. At Alaric's command several hundred soldiers made ready for the attack, and laid an ambushcade along the road that Valens and the Roman ambassadors would have to take.

The Roman infantry swung along the road in measured march time. With each legion went its engines of war, rolling by with a great clatter. Troops of cavalry

trotted on ahead or galloped along the flanks of the column. Riding between Maximilianus and Attalus, their general, Valens, called his companions' attention to the magnificent bearing of his men. "The Roman soldiers who have conquered the world," he proudly said, and Maximilianus admitted that, given a few more legions, the Goths could be driven back to their natal steppes. Suddenly the travellers were overwhelmed with a shower of arrows. Surprised by this attack, the soldiers had no sooner secured their shields and drawn their swords than Barbarian horsemen rushed upon them from every side.

The ease with which they would vanquish the Goths had been all too often dinned in the newcomers' ears. No sooner did they actually see the Goths than they disbanded. Around Valens and Maximilianus a few soldiers fought bravely, but the Greek Attalus, who cared little for fighting, dug spurs into his horse's flanks, and succeeded in reaching Rome with the remnants of the magnificent legions. This prudent promptness made it possible for him to save the ransom the Barbarians would have exacted had they succeeded in capturing him. Maximilianus was less fortunate. Alaric had ordered that the ambassadors be taken alive. He hoped to learn from them some interesting details regarding the Emperor's intentions. Maximilianus did not supply them, but on the other hand, he had to pay to obtain his liberty. After some days spent in the Barbarian camp his ransom — a notable sum, thirty thousand pieces of gold — arrived, and he was able to proceed to Rome, where Attalus, less brave but more speedy in flight, had preceded him.

This act of aggression was only meant to remind

Ravenna of the impatience with which Alaric was awaiting the Emperor's reply, and to show him that if he relied on foreign troops to get rid of him, he had grossly miscalculated. The destruction of these Dalmatian legions would take on the significance of a warning. It would recall to Honorius's memory the picture of the Goths encamped in Italy, and serve to remind him of this tremendous power, quiescent for the moment, but capable of crushing the empire if satisfaction were refused it.

The minister Olympius, who had boasted of driving out the invaders with so weak a force, was indignant at the defeat inflicted on it. He clamored loudly about treason, and took advantage of the opportunity to have all his personal enemies executed on the pretext of heinous lese majesty. His fury was carried to such an excess that the highest personages no longer felt themselves secure. To save their lives they conspired against Olympius, and, after having long vainly annoyed the Emperor with their complaints, fomented a military rebellion, always the surest way of forcing a recalcitrant monarch's hand. Rising at their instigation, the army demanded that the minister — Olympius had prudently placed the width of the Adriatic between himself and his enemies — be put to death. His fall brought with it that of all the functionaries appointed by him, and once more the political, diplomatic and military personnel of the empire was changed. Eusebius was made chamberlain, and the patrician Jovius was named Prefect of the Praetorium.

Alaric was well acquainted with this Jovius, who had been governor of Epirus when the Goths were sent to garrison it. A friendship developed between the Roman



dignitary and the young Barbarian chief. Jovius, a man of intelligence, had at once recognized in the Balthung one of those ambitious men who will not content themselves with playing second fiddle, a chief destined, to use the popular phrase "to make his way." Since then he had followed from afar the stations of his destiny, had seen Alaric menace Rome and had realized that he was urged on, not by petty greed, but by a great longing for glory and power. Jovius did not possess any very well-defined political convictions; his course of action was dictated by circumstances, and he tried to exploit events as they occurred to the best possible advantage. He might have been blamed as an opportunist had he not, by this method — or rather lack of method — secured results favorable to his country.

When he had been appointed Governor of Northern Africa, he had persecuted the pagans, for all that he was secretly in sympathy with them, because at the time adoption of the new faith meant the consolidation of the Roman domination. He had displayed the greatest zeal in overturning their idols and burning their temples, not out of religious fervor, but because of policy. This same spirit of policy now directed him to rescind the tyrannical laws that had deprived the pagans or heretic generals of their rank, and inaugurate a tolerance that allowed these useful servants to reënter the service without molestation.

Flavius Attalus, appointed Prefect of Rome, a Greek and a pagan, willingly seconded these measures of religious liberalism. The concord disturbed by Olympius's persecutions was restored. Without possessing Stilicho's merit, Jovius resumed the Vandal's policy, that had put an end to the injurious religious dissensions, and assured

the army of the indispensable coöperation of the federated Barbarian generals.

Alaric profited by Jovius's rise to power to renew his negotiations with him. Jovius knew the Goth well enough to realize that he had not the slightest intention of overthrowing the empire, but on the contrary, wished to aid it. The need of an alliance became more evident with every passing day. To divide the purple with the rebel Constantine would have been one of those absurdities that bring about major catastrophes, and to invite this emperor of the Gauls to Italy to crush the Goths was tantamount to suicide. Once Constantine had set foot on Latin soil, he would not leave it. Was it not better to use the army Alaric offered to reduce this formidable rebel to obedience, and pacify Gaul, Spain and also Amorica, where new rebellions were always fermenting?

What did the Goths demand? The right to fight for the empire, to conquer new provinces on its behalf, to carry the victorious eagles around the world and to proclaim Rome's glory in every land.

Did their king, for his part, insist on sharing throne and realm, with the title of Augustus? No, he only asked to be made *magister militum* and enough pay to maintain his army. All this had already been accorded Saül, Merobande and Fravitta. But while they were mediocre, unambitious generals, Alaric guaranteed to gain as many victories for the empire as its greatest captains of yore had won.

These entirely reasonable, well-considered proposals prove that Alaric was not one of those blind conquerors whose whole art consists in galloping and laying about them until the day when a well-aimed arrow stops their

brief career. He realized that the coöperation of the Goths and the empire would be a combination more advantageous to both peoples than profitless wars, and he persisted in offering it, in spite of the absurd obstinacy of the preceding ministers in refusing to consider the advantage that would accrue to Rome.

The solution he proposed would satisfy all: Rome and the Senate, which would see themselves rid of the Gothic menace; and Italy, that the Goths would evacuate to fight in Gaul. It would suit the Emperor, who would crush Constantine without losing a single soldier, and, finally, the Goths themselves, who only asked for a chance to display their strength and valor and who, the war once concluded, would obediently withdraw to the provinces assigned them as a place of residence.

This is what Alaric said. His real plans, did they perhaps, contemplate a further development, he refused to disclose. Comparing the services he had rendered the empire with Honorius's silly inaction, would he not try to tear the crown from that unworthy monarch's head, in order to give it to the man who most deserved it, to wit, himself? Why not? Theodosius had been a Spaniard!

A conqueror's life is a road marked by halting places and without a definite goal. Every success can only be a prologue to future victories. One does not stop under way so long as possible triumphs beckon from afar.

Alaric would not have considered seizing the crown an usurpation, but only another way of serving the empire. (And would not ridding it of its worthless emperors be the best service one could do it?)

Just as horse and rider end by becoming one being, he would so intimately have associated his glory and

destiny with that of Rome, that he himself would no longer have distinguished subject from object, accessory from principal, hand from tool.

Jovius's rise to power, no doubt, might lead to a new turn in the relations between the empire and the Goths. Had not the Prefect of the Praetorium invited Alaric to meet him in Ravenna, to discuss the conditions of a mutual agreement? So when the Romans, weary of the Emperor's silence, decided to send another embassy to Ravenna, one which was to be joined by a delegate from the Pope, and asked Alaric for a permit to travel through the region occupied by his troops unharmed, Alaric sent them a squadron of his own guard charged to defend them against all aggressors. At the same time he begged the senatorial delegates and the papal legate — when they had carried out their mission in Ravenna — to take part in the work of the conference at which the conditions of a definitive peace and an alliance were to be settled.

### XIII: THE BANQUET OF JOVIUS

**R**IMINI, in those days, offered the picture of a somnolent little town suddenly turned upside down by preparations for an international conference. All available lodgings had been reserved for the members of the imperial mission and for the senatorial and papal delegates. Alaric occupied a small palace placed at his disposal by the owners. Gothic cavalry bivouacked in the public squares. New diplomats arrived every day, offering an ever varying spectacle that astonished the townsfolk. They saw pass bishops, with their processions of monks, priests and clerks, carrying banners and chanting psalms. The next day they jostled each other to watch Gothic chiefs, with long white beards or flaming red locks, sitting very straight in their saddles, their gigantic stature further increased by a tall helmet with flaring wings, ride by. Alaric, garbed as a Roman general, and Jovius, always followed by scribes, secretaries and technical experts, were pointed out.

The meetings were held in a vast chamber in the town hall. The masters of ceremony exhausted themselves trying to place the civil and ecclesiastical personages according to etiquette, and hesitated as to the rank to assign the members of the Gothic royal council, and the chiefs of clans whose banners showed a horse, dragon, bear, wolf or serpent. After interminable discussions anent precedence, the papal legate implored on the conference the blessing of God and of the Holy



Ghost, a prayer in which Christians, Arians and pagans joined, and work began.

At the first session Alaric had said he had not come to Rimini as an enemy, but in hopes of seeing his wish for an alliance between the Gothic monarchy and the Roman empire ratified. As the price of this alliance he demanded an annual wage in gold and the meat, wheat and wine necessary to sustain his troops. Istria, Dalmatia, Venetia and two Norican provinces were to be assigned them for quarters. As for himself, he asked nothing but the rank of *magister militum*.

Jovius found these demands very acceptable, but he discussed them as a matter of principle. If the Goth proved uncompromising, it would be time enough to accept them.

So great was Alaric's impatience to gain his object that he consented to everything without haggling. In spite of his lieutenants' objections he agreed to a reduction of the pay for his army. When Jovius began to pare down the quantum of wheat to be supplied he did not object. He was in a hurry to get it all over. On his side, Honorius's minister thought every petty advantage he secured a notable victory.

At the end of their meetings the negotiators sat side by side at the banquets given by the representatives of the Pope, the Emperor and the Senate, in which these doubtful hosts vied with each other in magnificence. And Alaric, in turn, invited them to his palace, and there offered them a splendid repast, in all respects worthy of the imperial table, so the guests declared.

Hence the atmosphere of the conference had been excellent. The conciliatory spirit that reigned was equally satisfactory to the Romans, impatient to see Alaric be-

come an ally, and no longer an enemy, and to the Goths who, wearied by too long a peace and prevented from plundering Italy, hoped soon to make up for lost time in Gaul and in Britain.

Unfortunately, a similar spirit did not exist in Ravenna. Jovius had obtained plenary powers to treat with Alaric, but it may be that he had exaggerated his influence over the Emperor. He told the conference of ambassadors that Honorius was bound by whatever engagements he himself made, and that all his decisions would be ratified. He forgot that there is nothing so dangerous as absence, and that the imperial chancellery at Ravenna followed the negotiations at Rimini with less optimism than he did. The letters in which he described the labors of the assembly, and boasted of the advantages he had gained over the Goths, were embellished with perfidious comments by the chamberlain Eusebius, who read them to the Emperor. Who can say whether this minister did not, at times, interpolate a few sentences, or read a different meaning into Jovius's reports? In conclusion the court at Ravenna had already developed its instinctive hostility against the man who takes an initiative destined to lead him to success. The former Governor of Africa had been accepted in order that Olympius might be gotten rid of, and on condition that he be discreetly indifferent to affairs of state, which were to be handled by the eunuchs and clerks. The envious saw with a jealous eye the advantage Jovius derived from his negotiations with Alaric. His merits were criticized, it was taken for granted that he probably would let the Goths outwit him. His enemies insinuated that in that event he probably found it worth his while. Eusebius took advan-

tage of his absence to monopolize the Emperor's confidence, and to try to ruin Jovius in his eyes.

While the diplomat was rejoicing over the concessions he had compelled the King of the Goths to make, the court at Ravenna was criticizing his weakness — soon he would be accused of treason.

The conference at Rimini was drawing to a close. The plenipotentiaries had agreed upon definite terms of peace, and Jovius had written the Emperor a letter in which he urged him to accept them. He did not for a moment doubt, incidentally, that Honorius, aware of the great advantage Rome would derive from this alliance with Alaric, would ratify the agreement.

Their diplomatic labors over, the ambassadors remained at Rimini awaiting the answer from Ravenna. Alaric and Jovius went hunting together in the woods surrounding the city. Banquets that lasted far into the night united bishops, Goths, senators and ministers. The peace was toasted, and there was general congratulation on the happy outcome of the negotiations. So great was the impression of concord and amity produced, that the townsfolk, glad to see the stay of the ambassadors in their city prolonged, and infected by their satisfaction, were prodigal of festivities of every kind.

One evening the members of the conference were supping with Jovius, who had provided the most delectable dishes — Russian sturgeon and African lobsters — in honor of the occasion. A number of pheasants, deer and boar had been killed, and his cooks had exerted all their art in the preparation of this festal meal with which the minister wished to honor his guests.

The repast was very gay. Alaric, reclining on the same couch with Jovius, chatted amicably with him. His goal was attained: Rome was about to award him the office his ambition desired, one that would make him the head of the whole imperial army. What could he not accomplish in the future? If the Emperor let him do as he chose, he would gain greater glory than was ever gained by Caesar or Titus. If, on the contrary, this ridiculous monarch thwarted his plans, he would depose him and put some intelligent and docile man in his place. Why should he not himself assume the diadem and the purple? It would not be hard for him to cause the barbarous name Ala-Reiks to be forgotten in favor of that of Alaricus, which henceforth, in all his documents, attested his Romanism, and which would look so well in the marble inscriptions.

In the goblets the servants kept filled with Vesuvian wine he saw flash the gold of the imperial crown, the reflection of the purple mantle. And while he acknowledged the toasts of his fellow-banqueters he pursued his splendid dream that, at last, was to come true.

The wine had been well shared. The majestic dignity the guests had displayed at the beginning of the banquet had yielded to noisy gaiety. The Gothic chiefs, who carried their liquor better than did the Romans, were nevertheless infected by their neighbors' joviality, and replied with great outbursts of laughter to the pleasantries they only half understood. All were on the point of exchanging those confidences that drink calls forth, when a secretary handed Jovius a "sacred letter," just arrived from Ravenna. All that emanated from the Emperor was called "sacred."

The minister rose at once and with a reverential air took the letter presented to him. He respectfully kissed the roll, broke the seal, and began to read. It was not customary for diplomats to open confidential messages at the table and to read them aloud, but — he was among friends, and, of course, the letter contained congratulations and praises addressed to the skillful negotiator, and approving of the expected ratification. "To our faithful and well-beloved servant Jovius, greetings," it began. Those present bowed their heads. It went on to say that as Prefect of the Praetorium, the Emperor left it to him to fix the amount of pay and supplies to be furnished the Goths. (Jovius bridled, flattered by this mark of confidence.) As to the office demanded by the King of the Goths — here Jovius turned graciously to Alaric — he was to tell the impudent Barbarian that the Empire would never consent . . .

Jovius stopped and murmured indistinctly. His legs trembled. He excused himself for having misread the line, his eyes had deceived him. He took up the letter again. But no, it plainly said "impudent Barbarian," and "the Empire would never consent . . ."

So great was the stupefaction of the auditors that no one moved. They looked at Alaric, who frowned. "Can't the sot read?" A bishop gently insinuated there must be some misunderstanding, and the senators cast uneasy glances at their Gothic neighbors. "Go on," said Alaric, simply. Jovius stammered that it was impossible; he felt ill, he wished to retire. The Balthung stopped him. He took up the letter that Jovius had dropped on the table in his confusion and glanced over it. The minister had read correctly. Honorius accepted



all the clauses of the agreement with the sole exception of the rank to be bestowed on Alaric — the one thing to which the latter attached any importance. In pompous phrases, Eusebius wrote that the Empire would dishonor itself by conferring so high a function on a Goth, and that the latter must content himself with the rank already assigned him, the highest he might hope to attain.

The Romans, terrified, then saw Alaric rise. In the Gothic tongue he spoke a few rude, sonorous words that must have been atrocious curses, for the Gothic chiefs uttered cries of rage. They had not understood the sentence that Jovius had read them in an unctuous voice, but their king now explained that the Emperor had shamefully insulted them, and had refused the conditions of peace submitted to him.

They leaped up from their couches with clamors that roused the horsemen stationed in the square. While Jovius, huddled on his couch, wept with fear and humiliation, and the terrified guests fled in disorder, Gothic words of command were already echoing in the street, and Alaric's escort was mounting. The inhabitants of Rimini, who had illuminated their houses and were waiting at their windows to see Jovius's guests leave the banquet hall, were dumbfounded to behold a veritable rout. The senators hid themselves in their lodgings, the mission that had accompanied the minister hurried to saddle horses and harness teams to chariots, while the pontifical delegates preached calm and mildness to chiefs of clans who shouted for their bows and swords.

This setback was all the more grievous for Alaric since it came at the very moment when he thought he

had gained his point, and because the Emperor's refusal was couched in especially insulting terms.

While the ambassadors precipitately packed in order to regain Ravenna and Rome before the Goths flew to arms, Alaric and his escort left Rimini. The inhabitants watched these rough horsemen with their terrible helmets ride by, angrily clutching the handle of lance and pommel of swords, their eyes shining with hatred and defiance.

The Balthung's squadron left the town tumultuously, at a gallop. Their horses' hoof beats rang out on the cobblestones with a menacing clangor. The townsfolk anxiously questioned the servants and secretaries of the ambassadors to discover what had happened, but, busy packing up their documents and fastening their chests, these did not answer.

Every one thought that Jovius's imprudence would cost the empire dear. The minister, perfectly sober, but still tottering with emotion and chagrin, got into his litter and gave the order to make for Ravenna at a gallop, and not to spare the horses.

A few hours later Rimini was once more a calm and silent small town. In the streets there lingered only a few citizens unable to sleep for excitement, and exchanging frightened comments. Some declared they had heard Alaric swear he would destroy Rome. They said his eyes darted flames, and that over his Roman corselet he wore a mantle made of a bear-pelt.

No sooner had his foundered horses brought him to Ravenna than Jovius hastened to the palace, impatient to excuse himself and to divert the Emperor's anger when he heard of his blunder. The ironic smiles that

greeted him, the coldness with which some of his clients bowed, showed him that his influence was gravely impaired. The perfidious amiability of Eusebius, who met him on the threshold of the imperial apartments, alarmed him more than the desertion of his friends and the joy of his enemies. The Emperor could not receive him at the moment, said the chamberlain, for he was very busy, which was as much as saying that he was in his poultry-yard feeding his hens.

Jovius had to wait until these fowls had eaten before obtaining an audience. Thus he had time to decide upon his attitude, and to rehearse the scene he had planned on the way from Rimini to Ravenna. His enemies would not let escape the present opportunity to destroy him, one for which the negotiations with Alaric would supply a facile pretext. It was already rumored that he had supported the Gothic king's point of view in order to ally himself with him and overthrow the Emperor Honorius with his aid. In every way he had betrayed his master's confidence, whether by stupidity or by treachery, and his friendship with Alaric was most suspicious. The eagerness he had shown in concluding the agreement proved that king and minister must have entered into some secret compact with one another. And what would not be said when it came out that he had read — at table, before his enemies — the “sacred letter,” the confidential message the Emperor had sent him?

Jovius's only hope of salvation was to reverse himself completely, to display a terrible hatred for Alaric, and to urge war against him with the same ardor he had shown in advising peace.

The Emperor did not care to discuss business when he was busy with his hens. So it was very probable that

he had not as yet heard of the incident at the banquet, because Jovius had reached Ravenna well in advance of the secretaries of his mission, and no indiscreet tittle-tattle had as yet penetrated into the palace. Hence he must take Honorius by surprise, and stun him with complaints and clamorous protestations, in order to commit him to this war to the knife that only alone could save — Jovius.

No sooner was he admitted to Honorius's presence than the Prefect of the Praetorium, in the grip of an emotion not altogether feigned, prostrated himself before the throne with every sign of the greatest dismay. Alaric, said he, that sanguinary Barbarian, had brutally broken off the peace discussions. He insinuated that only with the greatest difficulty had he saved his own life, menaced by the Goth's fury, and avowed that the latter in his rage had sworn to destroy the empire, to massacre all Romans and to reduce the Emperor to the shameful status of a slave.

Bewildered by this frenetic and incoherent account, the Emperor asked what was to be done. The prefect was waiting for this question. He replied that the only way to save Rome and Italy was to declare eternal war against this enemy of human kind. He himself would be the first to devote himself, by a solemn oath taken, not on God — that would not suffice — but on the Emperor's sacred head, to fight against Alaric without terms or quarter. Moved by his objurgations, the Emperor made a similar vow on his own sacred head. Reassured, Jovius now had the doors of the audience chamber flung wide open, had the functionaries, generals and courtiers who thronged the corridors and antechambers enter, and announced the decision Ho-

norius had reached. Every one present took the same oath. And all did so with the liveliest protestations of fidelity and devotion. What could be more beautiful, they said, than to shed their blood for the honor and the safety of the Emperor? The officers present drew their swords with cries of enthusiasm, and boasted that they would soon put the Goth in his place. A bellicose joy filled the entire palace, overflowed into the servants' quarters, and thence gained the kitchens, the streets of Ravenna, the barracks and the camps. The least, last eunuch even took the oath of war to the knife and no mercy given. Who, after that, could dare question Jovius's patriotic ardor?

By this ingenious change of front the minister redeemed the "culpable indulgence" of which he had been accused. In reality he was much disturbed with regard to the consequences entailed by the rupture. In deciding on war he had thought only of getting himself out of his position of danger, but what would happen now? He could imagine Alaric's fury, and the vengeance he would not delay taking for the outrage. He listened anxiously to the gallop of the couriers approaching the palace, sure that they were bringing tidings of the capture of Rome, not so well defended as Ravenna, and he expected the Gothic army, soon after, to arrive and lay siege to the imperial city.



#### XIV: THE PUPPET EMPEROR

ALARIC could not believe that on the verge of concluding a treaty so advantageous to the empire, Honorius would let himself be prevented by the Balthung's demand for the rank of *magister militum*. Was the price of the Romans so great and their memory so short that they had already forgotten the nationality of some of their greatest emperors, Germans, Iberians or Africans? Was it shameful to grant a Goth this title of *magister militum* that had not been refused a Vandal? Were they unaware that a Balthung's noble descent made him the equal of the first families of Europe? Caesar was descended from Venus; well and good, Alaric was descended from Balder, and that splendid god was certainly a peer of the intemperate goddess of love, whose lewdness the poets had sung.

It was impossible that the empire would challenge the rage and hostility of the Goths, at a time when these redoubtable enemies were still so close to Rome and Ravenna. In his first access of fury Alaric had felt inclined to massacre the imperial delegates, and command that all Italy be ravaged, so great was the disappointment he had experienced. Yet what profit would he have drawn from such a destructive outburst of rage? It would have definitely compromised his relations with Rome, and would have made any reconciliation, any agreement, out of the question.

One of King Berig's companions, under the same circumstances, would have yielded to the blood lust of the

berserk, who kills until he himself is killed, but Alaric was too Romanized to give way to the blind rage that was still a Barbarian tradition. And so he controlled the instinctive impulse that would have led him to commit a deed beyond recall.

The Goths, after the shameful insult expressed in the imperial letter, were waiting for the order to fold their tents at once and march on Rome or Ravenna. They trembled with joy and impatience at the thought of the tremendous carnage in which their chief was about to allow them to indulge.

Hence they were very much disappointed when they saw Alaric so calmly pocket the affront offered him, and once more begin to negotiate. Jovius's blunder compelled Alaric to choose between two delicate alternatives: either he could regard the Emperor's refusal as a definite reply, that left open to him only two courses of action, to return docilely to Epirus, or to break off all relations with Rome and declare himself her enemy. Or else, in view of the abnormal circumstances under which the letter had been read, in the midst of drunken revellers, the minister himself swaying and stammering, he could regard the message as void and never having been received. And, in fact, the Emperor's response had not been officially communicated to him. So, paying no attention to what Jovius might have stammered at table, he would continue to insist on the reply that had never reached the King of the Goths.

This shift was cleverly imagined, and allowed Alaric to continue his negotiations as though nothing had happened. He got together the bishops of the cities near his camp, and explained his intentions to them. He repeated that he did not wish to destroy the empire,

but to add to its glory, and he enjoined these pious intermediaries to make Honorius understand how advantageous it would be for him to reconsider a hasty refusal — one that he, Alaric, was willing to ignore — and grant him the rank he desired. In exchange he would at once set out against any enemy he was to fight.

The bishops were greatly embarrassed by this difficult mission but, nevertheless, agreed to undertake it. They repaired to Ravenna as Alaric's ambassadors, bringing Honorius letters full of deference and conciliation. Alaric continued to offer his alliance, leaving it to the Emperor to settle the terms. He was willing to reduce the amount of tribute and allocations, to give up Venetia and Dalmatia, and to content himself with Noricum alone. He was inflexible only with regard to the matter of the military rank he insisted on having. These signs of docility, which showed to what degree the Barbarian was eager to serve Rome, were in reality very poor policy. They proved that if Alaric cherished so great an admiration and veneration for the empire of the past, he had not the least idea of the resources and psychology of that of the present. Dazzled by the ancient annals of the Roman wolf and eagles, he did not realize that Honorius's passion for poultry was a bitter allegory of the change the Latin world had undergone, and that the only way he could obtain what he sought was by threats, compulsion, and brute force.

The more he dwelt upon his desire for a peaceable understanding, the more the court at Ravenna despised him for his weakness. It could not grasp the real strength of character of this man who persisted in asking instead of taking, and who, despite his people's

greed, preferred to spare rather than to pillage Rome. Used to the arrogance of Barbarian chieftains who, like Radagaisus, thought only of destruction, Rome never suspected all the eagerness, all the willingness to serve, that Alaric's request conveyed.

Only Jovius was in despair at having by his precipitation prevented an alliance that would have saved the empire. The Goth's pig-headedness in getting the agreement he desired proved to him that the assistance of this valuable auxiliary could have been bought at a low figure. He now asked only the two Norican provinces coveted by no one, because of their sterility and the small amount of revenue they produced. At the price he set, Alaric's army would have cost far less to maintain than those of other Barbarians, of the Alans, whose loyalty was always open to suspicion, or of the Huns, who were constantly clamoring for more money. He cursed the hastiness that had been responsible for the unfortunate vow of war to the knife, without which it would have been easy to resume the interrupted conferences.

It was not that the religious nature of his oath meant much to the sceptical prefect of the Praetorium. What one vow has done another can undo, but this particular one had been taken on the Emperor's head, and that was a sacred formula far more solemn and inviolable than oaths taken before the images of Christ or Jupiter.

Jovius could not break the oath he had so proudly boasted of having inspired, on the pretext that a more favorable solution now offered itself. A partisan of peace and convinced that peace was the only means of saving the empire, Jovius saw himself forced to make war because, in a moment of distraction, he had for-

gotten his country's welfare to think only of his personal predicament.

His policy, in the future, could no longer fall in line with his own convictions or depend on whatever favorable circumstances might offer, but must be governed by the imprudent words he had pronounced when he raised his right hand: war to the knife and no quarter given.

Yet fixed as this policy might be, he told himself that it would not endure for long, because Alaric would soon get the better of the Roman army. Yet then he would surely be merciless, for he would never pardon the empire for having deceived his ambition and refused the alliance he offered.

The letters the bishops brought from the Goth revealed a mingling of arrogance and of submission that increased the Ravenna statesmen's ignorance of their enemy's true character. He always spoke of sparing Rome, and at the same time made fresh concessions. Injudicious in their analysis of his intentions, Honorius's counsellors saw in his contradiction of terms no more than incoherence and a wish to come to an understanding, at no matter what price — and this encouraged them to refuse. Accustomed to see only the feeble demand an alliance, they did not realize that Alaric placed his power at the empire's disposal, and wished to use it on its behalf, only that he might not have to employ it against the empire. How could they imagine that a river about to inundate a land might prefer to fertilize it and fill its canals, and itself ask for the dike that would protect the countryside?

Alaric's drama had reached its climax. In spite of the repeated refusals of the Roman government, in



spite of the impatience of his people, who clamored for war and pillage, the Balthung still hesitated to become the empire's enemy after having for so long wished to become its ally. His position was made the more difficult by the fact that his ambition commanded him to associate his fate with that of the empire, yet forbade his accepting the subordinate positions that satisfied other Barbarian kings. He could not frankly say to the Ravenna envoys: The empire needs a head, and I will be that head. The immovable pride of the Romans would have made them laugh at the thought that this Goth presumed to rule them. And yet, just as he had saved Athens, he wanted to save Rome, even against the wish and the greed of his own people. In his mind the only object of the alliance between the empire and the Goths was to associate the two greatest forces in Europe, subordinating the nomadic, inorganic, to the organized power, and uniting the two crowns on one head — that of Alaric. If the Romans positively objected to having a Barbarian reign over them — as though this had not already happened! — for the distinction between "Barbarian" and "provincial" was purely arbitrary, he would find a "puppet emperor" in whose name he would govern.

Why, one might ask, did Alaric insist on *buoying up* the empire instead of completing its ruin and erecting another empire on its ruins?

Because of the undying prestige that literature and history undoubtedly confer, and the regret felt by every bold, active and ambitious man at seeing an excellent organization go to ruin.

Alaric humiliated himself before the empire because, notwithstanding its weaknesses, its absurdities and its

decay, it was still "the Empire!" The magnificence of its past hid from him the weaknesses of its present. The Roman statesmen, on the contrary, did not realize the immense power of the Goths, and refused to allow this vigorous blood-stream to invigorate the debilitated Latin organism, because they had lost respect for the strength and superiority that had constituted the greatness of their ancestors.

When the delegates of the Senate and the Pope's legates reported the untoward issue of the Rimini conference, and the breaking off of negotiations in Rome, their news aroused a furious anger.

The Romans had never pardoned the Emperor for having removed his court to Ravenna. The displacement had resulted in bringing about the departure of nearly all government officials and a large number of noble families. To deprive Rome of her Emperor was to contradict all the old traditions that made the Eternal City the centre of the world, it upset the balance of the whole Latin universe. Their self-esteem and material interest injured, the Romans foresaw the day when — the court no longer established there, in spite of her glorious past — Rome would cease to be a real capital and become an insignificant provincial town. Real estate values had diminished in alarming fashion, and many houses stood empty and could not be let. Every day magistrates, merchants and members of the idle rich class left for Ravenna to be near the Emperor.

This change of residence that had been a godsend to the Ravenna tradesmen, was a veritable catastrophe to the Romans, since, as the recent siege had proved, the high military command had shown not the slightest

interest in Rome, and had devoted all its attention to protecting Ravenna. Rome had purchased her safety with her own money. During the negotiations with Alaric, the authorities were concerned only about the security of the new capital, well sheltered behind its forests and marshes, and defended by the major part of the army. Little cared they whether the fury of the Goths were again aroused, since it could not touch the Emperor. If a new war broke out Rome, naturally, would have to suffer the consequences and provide for her defence by enrolling a home guard of apprentices and shopkeepers.

The discord between the two cities found fresh nourishment in the refusal of Alaric's offers, in spite of the advice of Pope and Senate. Robbed of her money, deprived of her slaves, Rome would see herself compelled to pay ransom or once again undergo the horrors of a siege. The boldest murmured that since the Emperor forgot Rome, Rome had better constitute herself another empire, which would be in accordance with custom and for the country's best interests. Had not the city owed her greatness in the past to the authority jointly exercised by Senate and people? It was time to revive this noble tradition and to show the courtiers in Ravenna that ancient Rome was capable of rebirth.

The event anticipated by the Romans soon came to pass. In order to hasten the Emperor's reply, Alaric decided once more to resort to intimidation. This maneuver, thought he, would result in deciding Honorius at last to give him the office of *magister militum* or, should he still refuse, would completely alienate Rome, irritated at having to endure the consequences of wars due to the dangerous caprices of the Ravenna court.

Should the hostility against Theodosius's son be great enough to allow the idea of deposing him and choosing another emperor to make headway, he would exploit it to his own advantage. So he left his cantonments in Etruria, and marched on the city. Once more he began by blockading the port of Ostia, which prevented any influx of food and condemned the besieged to starvation, and then he encamped before the walls. For the second time the tents of the Goths spread over the Roman *campagna*. The siege was resumed.

The people had suffered too greatly from hunger the year before to endure this torture a second time. Since they could not rid themselves of Alaric, they must treat with him. The mob made a demonstration before the Senate, and demanded that an embassy charged to discuss the terms of surrender be sent to the Goth.

Once again the senators in purple-striped togas left the city and entered the Barbarian camp. They expected to find the Balthung in a furious rage, and their shoulders were bowed in anticipation of the reproaches and menaces with which he might be expected to overwhelm them. Gothic officers, however, received them most courteously at the entrance to the camp, and escorted them to the dwelling of the king.

The soldiers saluted as they passed. Surprised, the ambassadors acknowledged the salutes: they were not accustomed to see Goths show such respect for the Roman Senate.

Alaric still wore his general's uniform, a mailed corselet embossed with a head of Victory, and the red-dyed pelt of the Barbarian auxiliaries. He rose as the senators entered. In apt phrases he expressed his admiration of the courage shown by the people of Rome, so

different from those of Ravenna, who had holed up like toads in their marshes. His greatest wish, he said, was to serve Rome, and the Emperor's treachery and bad faith had forced him, against his will, to resort once more to arms. He regretted that an empire with so glorious a past as well as future was ruled by a man unworthy of wearing the purple. The Emperor's personality only — he emphasized this word — prevented him from becoming the friend and ally of the Romans.

Surprised that the Goth in no wise reproached them, but was satisfied to blame the Emperor, the senatorial envoys enthusiastically approved of what he said. Those among them who favored deposing Honorius sighed, and remarked that if another could take his place the affairs of the empire would make better progress. Thereupon Alaric no longer hesitated to speak his mind, and at once dictated his terms. Rome was to declare Honorius deposed and to appoint his successor. In exchange the Goths would immediately raise the siege and become for all time the empire's friends and allies. He added that he would positively approve of Honorius's successor if the purple were bestowed upon Flavius Attalus.

Great was the joy of the Romans when the envoys returned with Alaric's reply: it was the first time peace had been purchased so cheaply. Flavius Attalus was popular because he owned a fortune that allowed him to bestow lavish alms on the mob, and had an adroit eloquence that captivated a people fond of oratory and flowing periods. Appointed superintendent of Church Donations, that is, Minister of Finance, after his embassy to Ravenna, he had — thanks to his control of the public funds — made even more friends than his



personal fortune could have gained him. He played the lyre and sang very acceptably for an amateur. A pagan, he had been converted to Arianism by the Gothic bishop, Sigisarius. It was known that he was still much attached to the ancient gods, as an artist, if not a believer. An Ionian Greek, he was intelligent, cultivated, able, and willing to satisfy every one. He would, first of all, establish the freedom of religious belief that pagans and heretics were equally eager to gain. He would, no doubt, authorize sacrifices and processions, and might even restore to the people the games of which it had been deprived since the festivities celebrated in honor of the victory of Pollentia, in whose connection the monk Telemachus had perished as a victim of his zeal.

Flavius Attalus agreed to all that was asked of him. Fervent Christians were the only ones who evinced some hostility toward this stranger, a friend of paganism, yet their opposition had but little weight. In congress assembled the Senate solemnly pronounced Honorius's dethronement, and designated as his successor Flavius Attalus, Prefect of Rome. The decree was submitted to the *comitia*, the assembly of the people, for ratification, and adopted with acclamation.

Alaric, having been informed of the decision of the Senate, sent his congratulations to Attalus, and announced that he would be present in person at his investiture, together with the leading chiefs of his people. Ravenna was content to poke fun at "the Greekling," and to deride him as "The Emperor of the Goths."

The goal was reached. At last the gates of Rome opened to the Balthung. The inhabitants nearly accorded him an ovation when he entered the city fol-

lowed by Gothic squadrons. The ships at Ostia, now that the blockade was raised, had brought immense supplies of foodstuffs to the city. The new Emperor announced a free distribution of meat, oil, farina and wine and, the following day, after the ceremony of his crowning at the Senate, chariot races and wild-beast fights in the afternoon, and a sham naval battle in the evening. All this made the people happy. Those who grumbled were silenced by hearing that it was better to have Alaric inside Rome, as a friend, than outside Rome, as an enemy.

## XV: ATTALUS IN THE PALATINE

**A**LARIC and his Gothic captains dismount before the palace of the Senate, and are ceremoniously conducted to the seats reserved for them.

To do honor to the approaching ceremony, their chief has ordered them to don Roman uniforms, and, ill at ease in their corselets and greaves, they regret their loose-fitting breeches, leather tunics and helmets with spreading wings. The contrast between their costumes and their flowing locks and drooping mustachios, their huge bodies imprisoned in their over-snug trappings, is as picturesque as it is amusing. Though with regard to externals they look like officers of the legions, certain senators are unable to repress a shiver at the sight of the Barbarians seated in their hall of assembly. Their presence creates an atmosphere of constraint. Attalus suffers from it, for it is all too evident that they have forced him on his countrymen.

The Senate! While he looks at these men wrapped in their purple-striped togas, on their tiered seats, Alaric is overcome by memories of the books he has read. Here the forebears of these magistrates laid down the law to the world, here echoed Cicero's orations, here the Roman people defended its independence against the encroachment of tyrants!

Flavius Attalus enters, followed by his friends, Lampadius, Johannes, Tertullus, Marcianus. He is tall and slender. His features are distinctive, delicate, acute; his glance is frank and lively. When one compares his with

the commonplace figure of Honorius, whose aspect is brutal and somnolent, one realizes that the new Emperor is far more attractive than the old. He is cheered when he appears, wearing the diadem and robe. This day he receives the homage of the senators and functionaries. He will then spend the night at the Palatine, in accordance with tradition, and the next day will deliver his great political speech before the Senate. This session, at which he will disclose his program, is looked forward to with impatience.

At the end of the ceremony of homage the Emperor makes a few appointments: Lampadius becomes Prefect of the Praetorium; Johannes, Master of Offices; and Marcianus, Prefect of Rome. Alaric received the coveted grade of *magister militum*, that makes him commander-in-chief of infantry and cavalry, and his brother-in-law Athäulf becomes "Count of the Domestics," an office that places him in command of the garrison of Rome and of the palace guards.

Few officers are left in Rome, since the whole army is camped round Ravenna, and so the filling of military vacancies is less bitterly discussed than appointments to civil offices. The Christians, in particular, are indignant at seeing Tertullus, a fanatic pagan, made consul, and Marcianus, an idol worshipper, appointed prefect of Rome. They insist that such sacrilege will expose the whole population to divine punishment.

Attalus ascends to the Palatine. He sleeps in the palace of the Caesars. Did any of the mighty shades visit him? No one knows. The next morning he declares that he has slept well, and that he will add the title Augustus to his name.

If, the day before, the presence of the Goths had

seemed to embarrass him, he shows no sign of embarrassment when he now rises to address the senators. After having paid tribute to the majesty of Senate and people, he outlines the salient features of his future policy.

Within the realm he means to restore in their original strength and authority the institutions of the Rome of old. The Senate is to regain its independence and all its ancient prerogatives. (This portion of Attalus's speech earns great applause.) With regard to religion, absolute tolerance would be the rule in the future. Every citizen was to have the right freely and without interference to practise whatever cult he might choose. All religions were to be on a footing of equality and respected by the State, irrespective of belief.

The coins he expected to mint, Attalus said, whose reverse showed the figure of the Emperor seated on his lion-headed throne, would no longer display the *labarum* of Constantine, but instead the figure of Victory, eternal protectress of Rome and arbitress of her fate. The property of which it had been despoiled was to be restored to the College of Priests, the closed temples were to be reopened for the benefit of pious worshippers, and, in the future there would be but one official and universal cult, that of Rome and of the State.

Attalus wished his reign to be the point of departure of a new era of prosperity for the empire, which was to grow continually vaster, stronger and richer. His foreign policy would restore order in the disturbed provinces, and would recapture from the Barbarians those countries that the weakness of preceding emperors had allowed them to seize. Regaining their old-time spirit of conquest, the Romans would soon make themselves





The Historic Base of the Theodosian Column



masters of the lands that hitherto had escaped their swords. Without exaggeration they will once again be able to say that soon Rome will in truth be the capital of the whole world. In a lyric-concluding figure Attalus bids the great men of old, the founders of the Republic, speak and — not forgetting Romulus, Numa, Trajan and Marcus Aurelius — declare by his voice that Rome is at last about to realize her mission, and that Flavius Attalus Augustus is the very Emperor needed to bring about her apotheosis.

While saying these memorable words Flavius Attalus Augustus from time to time looks at Alaric, who sits fronting him. The Gothic chiefs have returned to their camp: only the Balthung and Athäulf are present at this session. Their official position, in fact, puts them on a par with the greatest personages of the empire.

At times Alaric glances at Attalus, who speaks so smoothly, at times at the senators listening to him. At last, he has attained his goal! The masters of Rome, this laughable Emperor and these magistrates devoured by jealousy, impotent envy and religious hatred, will no more oppose his wishes than marionettes will defy the showman's hand on the strings. As a matter of form the diadem and purple-striped togas must be respected, yet what a gaping void is hidden by this gold and purple, what an absence of martial spirit and political talent evinced by these descendants of the ancient Romans!

The ambitious vulgarian lays stress on a title. Yet what matters it to Alaric that another be called Emperor, provided he, himself, is the real power? He willingly resigns the gorgeous mantle and crown to the Greek music lover. For power does not reside in life-

less objects, but in the will to vanquish and overcome. Thanks to Alaric, the empire will henceforth gain a new glory — for which, no doubt, this elegant, verbose Greek will get the credit. It is he whom solemn official inscriptions and statue pedestals will term “victorious and sacred.” Yet is not victory’s true prize no more than the joy of the effort realized, of the goal attained? The Emperor and the Goths will divide the spoils: Alaric will keep for his own share merely the gratified pride of the conqueror or, should he accept a crown, it will be the modest laurel wreath of the ancient consuls.

He already tastes the curious pleasure of commanding — though his orders are delivered by another’s mouth — of directing the destinies of the empire, while no one knows that the Goth is really the master of the state. Ah, the intoxicating joy of the secret! What delight to efface himself the better to possess, to conceal himself behind a mannikin gowned in purple, his robe pressed by reverent lips, and to dictate his every word and deed to this puppet!

With what an ironic smile Alaric bows before this performer on the lyre! He lavishes on him all marks of the greatest respect, uses the title “Augustus” at every opportunity, and makes a point of never omitting the adjective “sacred” when speaking of anything pertaining to the Emperor: “his sacred robe, his sacred wishes, his sacred chair. . . .” Attalus, aware of his mockery, realizes what a gigantic farce this travesty of reverence is. Arrogance would be less humiliating than this feigned devotion.

Were he able to reproach his general for some error of etiquette, some undue familiarity, he would feel him-

self less the slave of the Goth. Were he less intelligent Attalus would not perceive the hidden raillery; were he a stronger character he would free himself from this despotic servant.

The whole Roman court is duped by this adroit play-acting. In his bearing, his gestures, the carriage of his head and his glance Attalus really shows that imperial majesty reflected by busts, bas-reliefs and coins.

During the early days of his reign, following Alaric's advice, Attalus plays his part excellently well, tempering grandeur with condescension, listening with docility, greeting others without haughtiness. And though he cannot altogether repress a shiver of pride when men kiss his hand and murmur "Augustus," he conceals the intoxication of his triumph beneath an air of noble simplicity. Yet why does he so often meet the glance of eyes that scorn him? How pleasant to be an Emperor if you had not always beside you the man who gave you your crown!

"Your speech was admirable," Alaric told him. "And now we must act." What a lack of tact that "we" represented! When they are under four eyes, the Emperor and his *magister militum*, the whole paraphernalia of respectful deference vanishes. Alaric speaks brusquely and commands, in a voice that admits neither objection nor refusal. It is urgently necessary to do three things: to see that Italy acknowledges the new Caesar; to besiege Ravenna in order to depose — and, if needs be kill — Honorius; and to take possession of Northern Africa, to secure control of the food supplies. After that Constantine must be attacked and deprived of Gaul, order must be restored among the Britons, and the Picts and Scots, who are rising, must be beaten.



Then the Huns — who are becoming a menace — must be driven back to their Asiatic steppes, and the independent Goths must be taken in hand. And then — well, one would decide what came next.

Alaric gives his orders simply, without arrogance, as though speaking to one of his own officers, and Attalus blushes with shame; the contrast between this sovereign will and his own mediocrity humiliates him. He abruptly breaks off the interview, and summons the ministers who have been impatiently waiting in the anteroom. Alaric frowns: this pettish gesture alarms him. He thought he had discovered a monarch properly trained. Will he have to break a restive mount? A flash of menace lights his eyes, to which Attalus replies by raising his chin in a superb attitude of defiance.

The following day the *magister militum* is refused admission at the door of the sacred apartments: the Emperor will send for him when he needs him. Is it possible that the wretched Greek expects to reign by himself? What presumption! What folly! Alaric spends the day completing the plan of a great expedition against Northern Africa. He knows that the governor of this province, Heraclianus, is devoted body and soul to Theodosius's son. Hence he must be replaced without delay. It will not be hard. Alaric has already chosen the commander of the expedition, the Briton Drumas, as well as the regiments that are to accompany him.

At last Attalus receives him, but he is surrounded by the members of his council. Is it impossible to see him alone? However, the matter urges. It is necessary to act at once: Alaric explains his project and offers the decree to the Emperor for his signature. Why be in so great a hurry? asks the Greek, and adds that he had

already provided for the dispatch of an expeditionary force to Africa. Not Drumas, however, but a Latin named Constans is to command it, and there will be no need of sending an army — a detachment of legionaries will be enough.

Dumbfounded, the *magister militum* answers that serious warfare must be expected, that Heraclianus has many troops at his disposal. Whereupon Attalus smiles and replies with great contempt that the oracles consulted by Tertullus have declared that there is nothing to be feared on that score. The Consul bridles at seeing his advice as an augur triumph over Alaric's opinion as a general. The Goth realizes that the entire council is against him. He shouts at these pitiful statesmen that without him they would be less than nothing. Who was it that turned a superintendent of Church Donations into an Emperor? Who forced an incapable play-actor on the Senate? The whole world knows that Attalus is unfit to reign, and if he is not openly ridiculed it is only for fear of the Goths. . . .

Attalus pales before Alaric's anger. He hears the Balthung say, ironically, that when he gave him the purple he was unaware that he had at the same time endowed him with all the virtues necessary for a sovereign. And, incidentally, they were not necessary in his case. All that was asked of him was obedience.

The guards can hear the sound of the raised voices that come from the imperial council chamber. And now they can distinguish the Greek's falsetto and the cutting words the Balthung flings in the face of the Caesar and his ministers. He had not given a lyre-strummer the Empire as a gift only to have him abuse it. One man must command, a man of intelligence, will power and

daring, for such qualities are not so easily picked up as a purple robe and a golden crown. He, Alaric, knows what is best for the Empire. Then let him act and let none — Emperor or ministers — put stumbling blocks in the way of his plans.

Attalus trembles with rage. If he dared he would have the *magister militum* scourged, he would have him put to death for the crime of lese majesty — but he remembers the immense army of Goths camped near Rome, and dares not raise hand against the man who captains so vast a power. Huddled on his throne, he looks at the Balthung standing before him, this tall blond soldier whose glittering eye beats down every other glance. He mutters cowardly insults, he breathes threats — under his breath.

Alaric leaves the palace filled with rage and disgust. In order to forget this wretched band of rebellious supernumeraries he gallops at full speed across the plain, whipping up his horse, as though he would enjoy lashing Attalus, this actor who takes his purple seriously, and actually pretends to govern. He bursts out a laughing. Govern! Who, in the future, is to determine the fate of Rome but himself, the descendant of Balder, the King of these Goths who have already twice forced the city to surrender, and whose watch fires gleam like a sky of stars in the processional shadow of the aqueducts?

Every day the disagreement between the Emperor and his general increases. As the latter foresaw, Constans's expedition proved a lamentable failure. No sooner was it disembarked than the whole detachment was cut down by Heraclianus's soldiery. But though the governor of Africa will have been put on his guard

by this miserable attempt, it is not too late to try another attack. Let an army half Roman, half Gothic, be sent. "I want no Goths in Africa," is Attalus's crusty answer, to which Alaric replies that if the legionaries are to attempt anything alone Heraclianus can sleep without anxiety.

New quarrels break out between the Emperor and his *magister militum*. Every discussion gives Attalus a chance to rebuff the Balthung — furious at the discovery that the Greek is no longer the docile tool he needed — in a way he finds it hard to endure. Attalus heeds only Tertullus's stupid advice, and silences his general in every debate with grotesque presumption. Forced personally to make good the blunders committed by this crowned buffoon, Alaric regrets having placed the imperial power in the hands of a fool and, worst of all, a pig-headed fool.

During this time Jovius had been urging the Emperor Honorius to treat with the usurper. A poor treaty would be better than a war in which Ravenna was sure to be beaten. What did it profit them to be shut up in an impregnable city if all Italy recognized Alaric, and the African fleet carried all its wheat to Rome? To put a finishing touch to his protégé's success, said he, Alaric had in mind to come and tear the crown from the head of Theodosius's son, and install his cithara-player in the new capital. The Goths were strong.

Honorius would have preferred to embark on one of the vessels that lay in the harbor of Ravenna, always ready to put to sea, but Jovius, with oaths and prayers, prevented him. He had been willing to offer half the empire to the rebel Constantine; why not again share the throne, this time with Attalus, if he were willing

to overthrow his unworthy allies once he were strong enough to do so? Attalus was at Rimini, with Alaric, the senatorial army and the Goths. To poke fun at the Greekling and curse the anti-Caesar would not change the situation. It was necessary — whether one liked it or not — to adopt the policy of realism that he recommended.

The Emperor yielded. A delegation, composed of Jovius, Julianus, chief of the notaries, and the quaestor Potamius, left for Rimini, empowered to offer Attalus half the throne and empire. Notified of its coming, Alaric pressed the Greek to accept the offer Honorius made him. With the empire divided between two sovereigns equally incompetent and unfit to reign, the authority of the *magister militum* would only be the more firmly established. He felt that in Jovius he would find an intelligent collaborator who would second his plans.

Once again Attalus acted absolutely against Alaric's wishes. Pretending not to notice the frowning glances with which the latter threatened him, he received the Ravenna ambassadors with insulting arrogance, and when Jovius disclosed Honorius's offer, he answered with great irritation that Theodosius's son could no longer dispose of a throne that did not belong to him. "This vain fool," he cried, "deserves a lesson!" Out of his abounding mercy, however, Honorius's life should be spared, were he content to be sent into perpetual banishment to a desert isle, after losing a foot or hand. And Tertullus, amid peals of laughter, asked whether he could not be castrated as well.

The Ravenna envoys left, profoundly insulted. Yet Attalus, when he refused to divide the empire with



Honorius, had not the slightest suspicion that he himself had lost the Empire. Indignant at the ridiculous attitude the Greek had taken at this interview, Alaric decided to leave to his own resources this puppet whom he had hoped to find a docile tool.

Besides, Attalus had made himself unpopular because of his insupportable vanity, his gross arrogance, and his injudicious management of public affairs. Since the time when, his mind made up, he had opposed everything Alaric had advised, he had been guilty of the most disastrous follies. Rome was already muttering against the master she had given herself. Of what use was it to possess Italy if one lost Africa, the land that nourished her? The wheat-freighters no longer made Ostia, but put in at Ravenna, and the terrible threat of famine again maddened the population. Whenever Attalus appeared in public he was greeted with jeers and furious clamors. The mob insulted "the Greekling," imitating a citharist sweeping his strings, and shouting loudly for wheat. One day, in the Circus, a mocking voice asked the Emperor, since he was unable to provide food for the city, at least to set a price on human flesh.

While Attalus's popularity decreased, the political parties in Rome tore each other to pieces. Dissension had broken out in the Senate between pagans and Christians. Moved by religious feeling, the great family of the Anicii and with them many zealous Christians, systematically opposed every proposal made by the Arian Emperor, who sympathized with the idol worshippers. The Roman clergy complained that the new Consul, Tertullus, had publicly proclaimed himself pontiff. This tool of Attalus, who was constantly consulting oracles, went about carrying the ancient augur's

staff ending in a question mark, and insisted on being paid the honors due a chief haruspex. It was murmured that God would not allow such sacrilege to go unpunished, and that the whole city would have to expiate the errors of these stubborn pagans.

The sum total of Attalus's errors convinced Alaric of the crowned musician's weakness and stupidity. Jovius's letters encouraged him to serve Ravenna. Whatever might be Honorius's faults, they were equalled by those of Attalus. In siding with Theodosius's son he would return to legitimacy. The moment was opportune, so Jovius wrote him. A head was lacking in Ravenna since the Count of Domestics, the Gaul Allowig, had killed the chamberlain Eusebius. The murderer had been summarily executed, and disorder was still rampant. The civil and military powers were wrangling as to which among them should control, and rather than see one of their own number raised to power by the monarch's favor, they preferred to have a stranger profit.

## XVI: THE MOUNTEBANK UNCROWNED

ATTALUS had pronounced judgment on himself by his idiotic extravagances. He has deceived Attila's every hope. "What I have done I can undo," thought the Goth, "and this ridiculous Caesar's fall shall be as public as was his elevation to the throne."

The Balthung is one of those men who will not put up with a defective or unadaptable tool. While a man of no account may indulge his improvidence and wastefulness with impunity, the chief possessed by a great idea, the conqueror dreaming of fresh triumphs, the general and statesman, has to a greater degree than others a sense of economy. Now it was inexcusable waste to have presented Attalus with a crown. Incapable of wearing it modestly, and of subordinating his supposed authority to Alaric's will, the Greek no longer deserved the dignity attributed to him. No longer caring to resign himself to the rôle of an imperial puppet, and unworthy of being an Emperor in the real sense of the word, he will no longer figure in the plans of the king, which he nullifies by his annoying obstruction.

To invest this string-plucker with the purple meant no more to Alaric than telling one of his horsemen to take a message: the main thing was that each of them faithfully and exactly did as he was told. From the moment Attalus ceased to be the mouthpiece of his *magister militum*, and indulged in ideas and wishes of his own, he not only ceased to be a useful tool, but be-

came harmful, a sword that turned in the hand that held it, an arrow that weakened the strength of the bow.

In the camp trumpets announced that the Emperor would review the Roman-Gothic army the following day. Hungry for the homage refused him by the Roman Senate and people, Attalus meant to have the troops acclaim him. These forced acclamations, raised as a matter of service routine, were marks of respect that Alaric had hitherto insisted be rendered his protégé by generals who despised him, and soldiers who kept their affection for their true chief — the Balthung. Yet once again the army, "by command," uttered the traditional "salutes."

The Roman militia were aligned in the plain, amateur soldiers, poorly equipped, maneuvering like raw recruits and, above all, eager to return to Rome and get back to their stores and workshops. The Gothic squadrons contrasted strikingly with these sorry cohorts. Very tall, very straight in the saddles of their powerful mounts, these Barbarian horsemen seemed to be bronze and marble statues. The wind tossed about their multi-colored standards painted with the figures of wild beasts. Many of the Goths were uniformed in the Roman style, yet the majority, and especially the older chiefs, still wore their striped breeches, fur mantles and helmets bristling with aurochs horns or spreading eagle wings.

Attalus appeared, followed by Alaric, and was received with prolonged acclamations. The Barbarians saluted their chief with guttural cries, and the army of the Senate shouted the Roman "*Vivat!*" in honor of the Emperor.

Athäulf accompanied them, as captain of Caesar's

bodyguard, made up of the bravest riders among the Goths.

They ride along the front of the troops. The Greek, crowned with a diadem sparkling with a thousand precious stones and wrapped in a broad, gold-embroidered purple mantle, inspects the squadrons with a haughty air. Then, at his command, Alaric orders various maneuvers to be carried out. This done, the Emperor and his escort find themselves in the middle of a vast square made up of all the assembled regiments. There Attalus dismounts and makes ready to address the troops, as is his custom.

Suddenly Alaric interrupts and steps up to him. Without a word he undoes the clasp that holds together the imperial mantle at the wearer's neck. The Greek, stupefied, makes as though to resist, but so steely is the glance of the *magister militum's* eye that he allows his sacred shoulders to be bared without protest. Athäulf takes his mantle from Alaric's hand. The latter then tears off the diadem that adorns the Emperor's brow and passes it to his brother-in-law. All this has happened in a single moment, amid an awful silence. The army has not uttered a sound. In his short tunic, bare-headed, Attalus looks with sunken eyes at the imperial insignia of which he has been despoiled. So great is his surprise that he does not understand the real meaning of this degradation.

Astounded, the senatorial troops see the Barbarian lay hand on the sacred person of their Augustus, and seize those venerated objects, the diadem and purple mantle. Their astonishment over, they murmur. Some speak of drawing the sword and avenging the outrage done their Emperor, but the intimidating aspect of the



Gothic squadrons surrounding them make them realize the uselessness and danger of any overt sign of hostility toward Alaric. For to these horsemen all that their king does is well done. The Greek had always bored them with his high-flown speeches. They know him to be arrogant and a coward. Some of them remember seeing him making off at full gallop, the day when on the road from Ravenna to Rome they attacked the Dalmatian legions of the Roman general, Valens, who were escorting the ambassadors.

Attalus, distracted and bewildered with shame and fear, implores from every side an aid not vouchsafed him. He stretches out his hands to the Roman militiamen, who gaze at him with open mouths, without daring to make a move; and toward the horsemen, who at the sight of this trembling man, with bare legs and disordered hair, burst out into a horse-laugh. This is the moment for him to recall what the philosophers of his own land have said regarding the instability of human glory, and calmly to await a death that he can scarce hope to escape since, having taken the crown from his head, that head will surely be removed as well.

Alaric's eyes are so stern, that Attalus addresses his prayers to the kindly, indulgent Athäulf. He clasps the Goth's legs, he kisses his stirrup. His life, all he asks is his life. Athäulf good-naturedly reassures him: he will not be killed, he shall not even be hurt. In fact, since he plays the lyre so well, Alaric's brother-in-law will even attach him to his household to make music at meals. Doesn't his son Ampelius play the flute? Well then, he and his son may join the other servants, and they may rehearse a nice little program together for dinner that evening.

Thus Flavius Attalus Augustus, Emperor of Rome by the will of the Senate and Alaric's consent, left the throne of the Occident, and descended to the level of the lowest servants, the scullions and grooms, happy, all in all, to think that the one gift to which he could lay claim had saved his life.

Having rid himself of his dangerous protégé, Alaric could now negotiate freely with Ravenna. He sent to Theodosius's son the diadem and mantle of which he had stripped the puppet ruler, and Athäulf himself carried them to the palace. The gesture was variously interpreted by the ministers and courtiers of Honorius. Some regarded it as an act of submission by which the repentant rebel did homage to Caesar with the spoils of the usurper. Others criticized the arrogance of the gift: was Alaric impudent enough to imagine that it was his business to give and take crowns as he saw fit? Did he set himself up to be a " king-maker " ?

Jovius insisted that the offer of the imperial insignia should be regarded as a proof of Alaric's submission. Though it might not be very flattering to receive these ornaments that the actor, the imperial buffoon, had been smirched, one ought to recognize the good will shown by the Goth and thank him for it. For all Attalus's incapacity, the division between Rome and Ravenna, the support Goths and Senate had accorded this anti-Caesar, might have caused serious trouble in the long run. It was better to have the matter thus settled and, since Alaric had once more shown himself conciliatory, at last to accept the services he offered and concede him the dignity of *magister militum* he was so eager to have Honorius award him.

Knowing that Jovius would try to persuade the Em-

peror to give him satisfaction, Alaric remained with his army in the outskirts of Rimini, waiting until the conclusion of negotiations brought him the coveted command.

When he dined with his brother-in-law and saw Attalus plucking the strings in a corner of the tent, he would smile and have a servant take the musician a cup of wine, which the latter received with protestations of gratitude. Like a shoemaker back at his last, the Greek acquitted himself very well in his new position. He was familiar with jolly tunes that made the guests gay and animated, as well as those touching ballads that bring tears to the eye at the banquet's close. The consideration he enjoyed because of his musical talents was well worth the compulsory deference one accords an Emperor!

Used as he was to the temporizing policy of the imperial government, Alaric finally grew impatient. The couriers Jovius sent him day by day all brought the identical message:

"The Emperor is obstinate, hard to convince. Our adversaries are powerful, and their intrigues are endless. Let me persevere. I have every hope of success."

But such encouragements irritated instead of assuaging their recipient's desire. Was the Emperor unable to realize what his own best interests and those of the State demanded?

As a matter of fact, the brilliant success of Jovius's policy had already called forth much hatred and jealousy. Most visioned another Stilicho ruling the Latin, should Alaric be appointed *magister militum*. All those who had worked to bring about the Vandal's fall deplored the obstinacy of their Emperors in always choos-

ing aliens to fill the office, and the anti-Barbarian party gained many new adherents. It was recalled that Stilicho's father had already commanded the long-haired riders as a Roman officer, but that this fact had not prevented genuine Latins from considering his son a Barbarian and an intruder. In that case what about this Ala-Reiks — they affected to pronounce his name Gothic fashion — who came from God knows where and presumed to make and unmake Caesars? If there had to be a Barbarian general at all costs, then why not rather choose Sarus, docile, unambitious and anything but a genius?

It was the immutable Roman policy that opposed a mediocrity to the man whose worth threatened to advance him, as a counterpoise to prevent his rise. It sought a rival to oppose to Alaric, just as formerly Rufinus had used Alaric against Stilicho. Party prejudice and individual greed alone guided the acts and thoughts of these politicians preoccupied solely with their own gain and glory. Was Jovius himself an exception, and had he not merely arranged the alliance with Alaric in order to exploit it to his own advantage?

Sarus, who had thought himself forgotten since Stilicho's death, suddenly became a live factor in the situation. The diplomats inimical to Jovius and hostile to the proposed alliance with Alaric, aware of the clan feuds that divided the Goths, remembered that the family of this obscure general was the sworn enemy of the Balthung. This ancestral hatred had been reawakened by a recent quarrel between Athäulf and himself. And, finally, like all the Barbarian chiefs, he coveted Stilicho's heritage and was awaiting a propitious moment to enter on the scene. Fond of freedom and rapine, he

was working the roads in the Apennines, at the head of a troop of Gothic riders, holding travellers for ransom, pillaging caravans, robbing merchants and occasionally burning a village for the pleasure of violating a few women and watching the houses burn.

Neither the Government of Rome nor that of Ravenna had bothered to put an end to his depredations. His band of brigands, whom none dared molest, reigned in perfect security over a mountain country in which the Roman soldiers would have pursued them in vain. The empire had lost its balance to such an extent since Theodosius's death that chance might any day allow the man at hand at the propitious moment to seize the power. Instead of waiting for his good fortune to seek him out in Ravenna, Sarus preferred the highwayman activities that afforded him greater profit and amusement. If Honorius's ministers wanted him, they knew where to find him.

The name of this obscure general had won the endorsement of the enemies of Jovius and Alaric. They sent out emissaries who rummaged the defiles of the Apennines until they found the man whom they sought. These messengers, in the name of the Emperor, made him the following offer: Alaric was the only obstacle to his advancement. Let him rid the empire of the King of the Goths, and he would receive the title of *magister militum*. Thus he would at the same time gratify his hereditary hatred of the Balthungs and his ambition, as well as avenging himself on an enemy who laid claim to his office.

With the money these emissaries gave him, Sarus gathered about him all the robbers, deserters and fugitives of the countryside. Soon he had a small army at



his disposal, and he posted himself along the road the King of the Goths would follow.

One evening, while riding along the road to Rimini, accompanied by a few horsemen, Alaric fell into the ambushade prepared by Sarus. Well paid and tempted by the promise of a handsome gift if they returned with the Balthung's head, the robbers fell upon his small escort. But Alaric's strength and courage were so great that he repulsed and put to flight his aggressors in spite of their numbers. He even captured a prisoner who, adroitly questioned, told all he knew: Sarus's negotiations with the Emperor, the order to kill the King of the Goths, and the reward they were to receive.

Hence this attack on the part of outlaws was not an accident, but the carrying out of a secret plot. While he was dancing attendance, awaiting his appointment as *magister militum*, the same office had been promised Sarus on condition that he assassinate him! At last the delay of the court at Ravenna to conclude the alliance was explained by the double-dealing that the ministers were using to hoodwink him. Yet none made a fool of Alaric with impunity, and these diplomats should see what it cost to provoke the Goths. Since Honorius was no better than Attalus, he would see that he shared the fate of the Greek. Alaric would tear the crown from the head of this stupid and prejudiced child. He would shake up the backstair politicians who were busy weaving their spider webs. In Ravenna as in Rome there was naught but vainglory, folly, treachery and petty intrigue, the machination of eunuchs, generals void of character and ministers lacking ability.

“Why has Fate allowed the Roman empire to fall into the hands of men unworthy of so great an honor?”

Alaric's heart was filled with disgust and contempt, for he saw around him only sordid scheming, stealthy conspiracy and cheap calculation. Among this people that had produced Cato, Cincinnatus, Pompey and Trajan, there was not one leader willing to sacrifice all, himself as well as others, in the interest of the country, or who wished to restore Rome's position as queen of the universe!

To cast off his melancholy, rage and disappointment, Alaric planned to forget this ungrateful and stupid empire. He invited his chief officers to a banquet served after the Gothic fashion. It was given in the great tent where, as a rule, the council of chiefs was held. It was lit by pine torches. Banners with dragons' heads hung above the tables. Alaric had made the centenarian who had first taught him to draw the bow, and who had given him such good advice at the battle of Pollentia, sit beside him. Around the table were to be seen nothing but the white hair and beards of aged counsellors, the tawny manes and drooping mustachios of young chieftains. Alaric was in the midst of men of his own race.

Enormous lumps of beef, still bleeding, and roasted at the lance's end, were served. At a sign from the venerable Goth, the bards had seated themselves in a dark corner. The first chords they drew from the strings of their instruments caused those present to fall silent, and suddenly one of their number chanted a martial poem in a sonorous voice. He sang the three ships of King Berig, who had left Scandinavia to conquer the world, and their long course amid the tempests and ambushes of the sea trolls. Then he told of the deeds of King Filimer, the conquest of Ostrogothia, the victories of Kuria. The grey waves of the Baltic Sea, the

Lithuanian plain, the stormy shores of the Euxine, the pasture lands of the Maritza, passed in a vague, quivering panorama before the minds of the auditors.

The glorious names of old as well as those more recently connected with the Gothic migrations — Hermanric, Athanaric, and Fritigern — returned in the song, and with them memories of victories over Alans and Vandal, of battles against the Huns.

When the exhausted singer stopped his listeners uttered a long sigh. Alaric suddenly seized his drinking cup and flung it to the ground. Then he demanded hydromel. Accustomed to the wines of Greece and Rome, the Goths had not tasted this beverage for a long time. But once they held the drinking horns filled with this sweet, strong drink that King Berig and his comrades had drunk before setting out on their long journey in their hands, they remembered an old song of warrior glory. The old men resurrected it from the depths of their memory, and raised their quavering voices, and the younger warriors, who perhaps never had heard it, joined in humming the tune.

Recaptured by the traditions of his race, by the past and by the virtues of his people, Alaric felt himself swept by a new enthusiasm. Why did he, a Goth of royal blood, wish to become a servant of the Romans? Was there not as much energy and heroism in the history of his ancestors as in that of the Caesars? Had Rome ever done aught but oppress the Goths and reduce them to slavery? And he listened, as though the bardic chant, the poets' declamation, rhythmized by the metal strings, now had a new meaning for him.

While the Mongol horsemen harry the rear guard of the horde, the Danube amid its cakes of ice rolls broken

wagons and the carcasses of horses. But salvation will come from Rome, from Rome's hospitality. No sooner have the Goths reached their shore than the Romans hasten to them, ah yes! But it is to snatch sword and bow from the men, to tear their collars of gold from the women's necks and the buckles from their mantles. The canny Romans, the compassionate Romans! Is it to save the Gothic children that they hurry to carry them off, or is it to fling them into their *ergastula*? The slave dealers are already making the soldiers lead off, one a young girl, the other a handsome boy. The officers chain together the blond women and sturdy men by the hundreds. You did well, Goths, to count on the hospitality of the Romans! . . .

The chord lingers and breaks off. In a new rhythm, no longer ironic, but gloomy and furious, another chant begins. It tells how the Goths, deprived of their weapons, blow the bellows at hidden forges by night and weld the iron of their cart wheels into sword blades. And the singer calls them holy, these swords with which the oppressed nation will regain its independence, these slips of metal that the hammers beat softly in order to make no noise; and, in conclusion, the revolt, the war of liberation and the victory. Then the song stops. There is nothing left to tell. The Goths have become the allies of their oppressors, the servants of the Romans. And so intense is the silence that one can hear the sentinels at the ends of the camp exchanging the old watch cry of the nomad nights.

## XVII: THE SACK OF ROME

**H**IS disappointment over the failure of the negotiations on the very eve of their successful conclusion, the humiliation of seeing Sarus preferred to him, had already shaken Alaric's Romanism. The Balthung regretted the years he had spent soliciting a command from Rome, when it would have been so simple to rally all the Barbarians and fling himself on the empire at their head. The hope and ambition that had animated his life, were they no more than an illusion, a lure whose glitter had turned him away from his real road, and drawn him into a blind alley where he could find neither glory nor gain?

While he still hesitated to enter into conflict with the Emperor, Sarus had been conducted to Ravenna. The ministers admired his martial bearing and insisted that he would make an admirable *magister militum*. Honorius — without the knowledge of Jovius — received him in secret, and promised him all that he had refused Alaric. He granted this second-class highwayman the proud insignia that the Goth of noble race, the descendant of Balder, had vainly longed to obtain.

Delighted, Sarus swore a tremendous oath of obedience, and vowed he would rid the empire of its real scourge, the Balthung. Eager to secure possession of the Gothic army at the same time, he advised the son of Theodosius to invite Alaric and Athäulf to Ravenna, under pretext of negotiating with them, and to have them put to death. Deprived of their chiefs, he said,



the Goths would at once become tame and submit to whatever master the Emperor gave them.

Jovius could no longer plead Alaric's cause without risk of compromising his own position. The Gothic king's name was so execrated in Ravenna that it would have been all his life was worth to support him, and the party backing Sarus was too powerful to allow Jovius to oppose it with any hope of success. Like the good opportunist he was, he once more reversed himself and also joined the group in control. He did, however, advise Alaric of the conspiracy formed against him, and of the trap that awaited him in Ravenna.

His message confirmed the suspicions Alaric's spies had already expressed. They meant only to deceive him. Alaric wished to make one last attempt to reach an understanding with the Emperor, failing which he would officially break off negotiations. The courier he sent to Ravenna with a letter demanding the promised rank and the necessary provision for his troops, returned with a vague and dilatory reply, in which there was but one explicit phrase, that which invited the King of the Goths to come to Ravenna together with his brother-in-law.

Avoiding the trap, Alaric answered that he would not go to Ravenna unless he obtained in advance the advantages he claimed. This message was couched as an ultimatum, and, as a matter of fact, was the last attempt he made to avoid war. His future attitude would depend on Honorius's answer: either he would remain a Roman general, or he would definitely abandon this empire that repulsed his offers of service, and again become a Barbarian chief, the hereditary foe of the Latins.

Heedless of the danger, or persuaded by Sarus's

friends that an alliance with the latter would be more advantageous than Alaric's support, Honorius took no notice of the threat this ultimatum concealed. At his command, a scribe answered it in reticent and ambiguous phrases.

A little river called the Rubicon runs along the road from Rimini to Rome. In his admiration for the great men of history, Alaric had never crossed it without recalling, with a feeling of respect and sympathy, Caesar's resolute act. And it was to imitate at this decisive moment the example set by the latter's daring will power that he flung his insignia as a Roman general into the Rubicon, as though thereby he meant to attest that henceforth he had flung away his entire past as the empire's servitor. Since, officially, he was still *magister militum* of the Emperor of Rome, however, he wishes to emphasize the break, and to take leave of the people and the Senate with a significant ceremony of some kind.

A horseman rode to fetch Attalus, in the domestics' quarters of the camp, and brought him to Alaric. The Greek had fetched along his lyre, thinking that he was wanted to make music, and was greatly surprised to see on a table in Alaric's tent a purple mantle and a gold crown studded with jewels. Without any explanation, Alaric ordered him to put them on. He obeyed, trembling with joy and apprehension. Was he once more to become Emperor, or was this merely a humiliating and derisory masquerade? Since his trembling fingers could not buckle the clasp of the mantle, Alaric himself fastened it, and placed the crown of the Caesars on the musician's curly locks.

The Balthing's expression was so severe that Flavius

Attalus could not think himself the victim of a joke. So his imperial office was to be restored to him, after all? Alaric did not answer his questions. At last, irritated by Attalus's persistent interrogations, Alaric made a menacing gesture. Then Attalus said no more, and obediently allowed himself to be led out of the tent. A white horse, splendidly caparisoned, awaited him. At Alaric's command the Greek mounted, and preceded by heralds blowing their trumpets the procession, formed according to the ceremonial of an imperial progress, set out in the direction of Rome.

Alaric and Athäulf rode beside the musician, and the latter asked himself whether the shame of his degradation, and his ignominious sojourn among the servants had not been a dream. But his capricious patron's bearing was so savage that he did not dare to open his mouth. Throughout his ride he reflected on the strange vicissitudes of a life that had turned a cithara player into a Roman emperor, had then relegated him to his business of making music, and this day had made him an emperor again . . . for how long? He noticed that the procession was followed by the whole Gothic army, and that the soldiers were armed for battle.

Alaric found the gates of Rome shut and the ramparts well equipped with engines of war. Since he had degraded *their* Emperor, the Senate and people detested the Goths, and were burning to avenge the outrage offered them. After Attalus's deposition at Rimini, the senatorial troops, returning to Rome, had described the humiliating scene at which they had assisted. The Senate realized that after this degradation a return to the offensive on Alaric's part was to be expected, and decided to put the city in a state of defence. The

plebeian militia drilled every day. It stood guard and practised the manipulation of the ballistas and onagers. The example set by the Gothic soldiers, by whose side they had camped at Rimini, had reawakened the Roman warrior spirit of yore and stimulated the legions.

All men able to bear arms had insisted on serving in the militia. The descendants of the aristocratic families did not disdain to seize helmet and lance and take their turn at guard-mount along the walls. The proximity of the enemy extinguished ancient class and religious hatred. Even Tertullus was forgiven his whimsies as an augur. Though they worshipped different gods, all Romans felt themselves united in one desire: to save the city. For it was in their minds that Alaric, who had spared Rome the first time only at the price of a huge tribute, and who had raised his second siege only to enter the city as a master in Attalus's escort, could not be repulsed on this occasion save by force of arms.

When the strange procession was seen approaching the inhabitants were agitated by a violent curiosity. They beheld, heading the cortège, the purple mantle on the white horse, the sparkling corselets of Alaric and Athäulf, and behind them the dark mass of the Gothic army. The curious hastened to the ramparts, elbowing each other aside and clinging to the battlements. Everybody wondered why the Goth was bringing Attalus back after having dethroned him. The wretched Greek cut a poor figure. He trembled with fear, and awkwardly wrapped his purple mantle about his shaking limbs.

The army came to a halt within arrow shot. The former emperor and Alaric detached themselves from

the front of the army and rode to the foot of the wall. All the witnesses of this strange scene looked on, panting with surprise and curiosity. What was the King of the Goths going to do with his "emperor of the boards?"

A cry of stupefaction broke from every mouth when Attalus, obeying the Balthung's imperious gesture, dismounted from his steed. The degradation of Rimini had been witnessed only by soldiers. Alaric now wished the whole population of Rome to see how little account the Goths made of a Roman emperor, and he wanted all — senators, patricians and plebeians — to feel the full force of this act of humiliation, insult and defiance.

Rudely awakened from hopes that had already dallied with dreams of grandeur, Attalus, ready to submit to every ill that could befall him, resignedly awaited his master's pleasure. The first time, at Rimini, Alaric had stripped him with one swift movement; on this occasion he wished to prolong the agony.

While the Romans bellowed insults and curses, he slowly undid the mantle and spread it out before flinging it on the ground. After having taken the crown from the Greek's head, he gazed at it for a few moments, as though at a loss and then, with a gesture of indifference, dropped it on the mantle. As it fell some of the precious stones, pearls and rubies, detached themselves from the diadem, and rolled on the gold and purple garment.

This done, Alaric seized the whip that hung from his saddle and, cutting the unfortunate musician across the shoulders with it, ordered him in a severe tone of voice to rejoin Athäulf's other servants at once, and not to risk playing at emperor in the future.



Then he deliberately ran his eyes over the dumb-founded faces that lined the walls, with an air of menace as much as to say: "That's what I think of your Caesars! I set them on the throne, or drag them in the mud, as I see fit. You crowned this cithara player, and I have taken away his crown. Henceforth I shall show the men and the things of Rome neither respect nor pity."

He had flung his girdle and baton of command into the Rubicon, but he had kept the corselet and the helmet that indicated his rank. Now he slowly undid the buckles of his cuirass and sent his embossed coat of mail rattling down beside the glittering imperial insignia. He then took off his gilded helmet with its red plume and let it fall on his corselet.

At a sign from him a Gothic horseman advanced. The Balthung took his bronze helmet with its aurochs horns and put it on his head. The soldier also gave him his leather jerkin, his long sword and battle-axe, bow and quiver.

The Romans, without understanding its tragic significance, watched the Balthung's transformation. They no longer were confronted by Alaricus, the imperial functionary, *magister militum* and patrician of Rome, but by Ala-Reiks, scion of Balder and King of the Goths. With each detail of the equipment he cast off, he stripped himself of a part of his admiration, his fervor nourished by history and literature, his ambition to reign peaceably over the city of Romulus. Together with his Barbarian arms and vestments he had regained his ancient instinct of conquest and pillage, heritage of centuries of migration, his nomad restlessness and desire for revenge.

After having long fought for this man, the Roman

within him yielded to the German. The feeling that filled Alaric's heart was the rage of one who cannot possess that which he loves, and who refuses to forgive his deception. He had venerated Rome too greatly to make docile renunciation of his desire to rule her possible: his sole wish was to destroy what he had so passionately and vainly desired.

While Alaric, within bowshot of the walls, carried out his symbolic metamorphosis, not a Roman soldier thought of laying him low with an arrow, so much of mystic and savage grandeur, of suffering and despair, did his action betray.

The Gothic army had camped around the city. The royal tent, hung with banners, was set up on the rise of ground that dominates Ponte Salaro. Already the camp fires were sending up their smoke. Alaric turned his horse, and disappeared. The last rays of the setting sun caught the gilded helmet, the gems of the diadem, the scales of the corselet, the gold broidery of the mantle, abandoned between the walls and the camp, in that no man's land where Barbarian and Latin were once more to meet in combat.

The first twilight that shadowed Rome, besieged for the third time, already heralded the anguish of famine and defeat. Henceforth not a boatload of provisions could be brought up the Tiber. Mobs were already gathering before the practically empty granaries. Anxious men remembered that, according to the prophecies of the Sybil, the end of Rome was at hand. The augur Tertullus apprehensively questioned the flight of ravens, the entrails of cocks, and the appetite with which the hens turning to right or left — a serious omen — to peck at their grains of millet.

Alaric no longer had any motive for sparing Rome. Whereas in the two preceding sieges his preoccupation had been to induce the city to capitulate, he now only wished to end with the siege as soon as possible. Face to face with the city of the Caesars, he was animated by the spirit of a Radagaisus or a Tribigild.

And he besieged the city with all the bitterness and thirst for conquest an ancient foe might have shown. For this time it was a question neither of rank or of ransom, but of thwarted desire passionately bent on revenge.

From the very first day the besieged suffered from famine. The Goths cut the aqueduct that supplied the city from the springs on the Sabine Mount. But though the Romans were tormented by lack of water, the oppressive heat of August, and sicknesses of various kinds, they would not surrender. Well they knew that Alaric would no longer content himself with a tribute of gold, silks and spices. He wanted all Rome delivered up to the fire and sword of his rancor, and they hoped to save their city from so tragic a fate.

For Alaric the taking of Rome was only a first step, and, in some sort, a symbolic gesture of his break with the empire. More important was the conquest of Northern Africa, that would starve Italy, and the fall of Ravenna, that would put the Emperor's person in his power. Hence he did not wish to lose time bombarding Rome towers with blocks of stone, and thundering against her gates with battering-rams. Once more a Barbarian, he would employ a Barbarian's craft and audacity. He would take Rome by surprise, disregarding all the rules of military art.

On the evening of August 24, in the year 410 A.D., he

noticed in the sky those dark blotches that announce a short and violent summer storm, accompanied by torrents of rain, thunder and lightning, and fierce gusts of wind. He ordered his officers to hold their men in readiness to attack. Massed before the Salarian Gate, to the east of the Pincian Gate, the one through which the salt sent to the Sabines had been carried, they awaited the signal.

The storm came up. Clouds covered the sky, extinguishing the light of moon and stars. From time to time a livid flash of lightning rent the clouds. The bursts of thunder came nearer. Two years before, that very day, Stilicho had been assassinated. Alaric's romantic soul, struck by the coincidence of dates, exulted in this fury of the elements that would facilitate his victory while at the same time blessing it with a kind of supernatural approbation. If, the year before, he had entered Rome in Attalus's suite, one festive morning, to-day he would fling his Goths against her walls on a night of tempest, while the wind raged and howled.

The first drops of rain fell, large and warm. The thunder rolled. With the continuous roll of the thunder was soon mingled the ringing clash of the bronze battering-rams against the Salarian Gate. While the soldiers, protected by their shields, swung the enormous ram that was already shaking the massive portals in time, other Goths were raising ladders against the walls, and, nimbly climbing on the shoulders of their comrades, were scaling the top of the ramparts. The sentinels, dazed by the lightnings, deafened by the thunder, and wet to the skin, cursed as they clutched their wind-filled mantles with both hands. Most of the guards

had taken refuge from the tempest in the lower rooms and galleries.

For the Goths the uproar of the tempest evokes the fantastic gallopade of the Scandinavian gods and heroes of ancient times. The eight hoofs of Wotan's steed strike sparks from the clouds, and they seem to hear the neighing of Sleipner, Odin's horse, in the gusts of wind. With violent blows of his hammer Thor is forging their victory. Carried away by almost religious enthusiasm, for their conversion to Christianity has not entirely driven out their olden superstitions, they divine a celestial ally who guides them amid the rage of the elements.

So terrible is their aspect that when the Romans see the helmets adorned with horns and wings loom amid the lightning flashes, they think hell has let loose its demons on them. Aroused by the sentinels' cries, the soldiers hurry to the ramparts, but they come too late. The Goths, having gained the top of the wall, fling down ropes to those below, who clamber up to the battlements. Others are already attacking the gate's defenders in the rear. With the fury of avalanche or tidal wave a crowd of horsemen bursts its shattered portals and spreads devastatingly through the Pincian and other near-by city quarters.

Without having expressly forbidden pillaging, Alaric has issued severe orders. The Goths are not to maltreat old men, women or children. They are to respect priests and monks, and, in particular, the churches, which are to be considered held sacred, and whose right of sanctuary is to protect all — soldiers or civilians — who take refuge within them. "I am making war on men, not on the Apostles," the king has said, and he threatens



with condign punishment those of his subjects who disobey his order.

Yet if the Gothic army, properly speaking, strictly obeys orders, the same cannot be said of the Germanic reinforcements of Tribigild's runaways or Gainas's deserters, who have joined it, and, above all, of the slaves freed two years before, after the first siege of Rome. These men, enrolled with the regulars, but still not entirely broken to strict military discipline, see in the taking of Rome no more than a way to avenge the sufferings they have endured, and to make their former masters atone for the cruel treatment they have undergone. They represent the dregs of the mob that appears in all revolutions and civil wars, and that only emerges suddenly from obscurity to appear in the foreground of the stage. If it be hard to control the instincts of the Goths, it is harder to prevent these maddened men from committing every atrocity. There are from thirty to forty thousand of these liberated slaves, who will terribly avenge themselves and provoke the destruction their chief has forbidden. It is they who spread through the Gardens of Sallust, near the Porta Salaria, and set them afire after having devastated them. Whipped by the wind, the flames gain the neighboring houses, and soon this whole quarter of Rome is ablaze.

Hastily assembled, the militia battle against the invaders with admirable courage. In spite of their poor equipment, they advance like veterans. Nobles and shopkeepers, patricians and plebeians, merged this tragic night, they fight with the boldness and obstinacy of men who are defending the lives of their families and the thresholds of their homes. Worried by an enemy greatly superior in number, exhausted by famine and



Rome is Sacked by the Goths



fatigue, they oppose to the Gothic advance a barrier that gives way, alas! and falls back step by step. Yet facing the danger that assails them, they regain the spirit of the old legions, the stubborn loyalty of the Roman infantry of yore. Surprised while they slept, most of them have not had time to seize their helmets or buckle on their corselets. They fight half-naked, lashed by the storm, groping in the darkness, stumbling against the leather jerkins and long swords of the Germans.

The fire devouring the houses of the Salarian quarter throws a tragic light on narrow streets through which blond giants rush with triumphant shouts, and on spots where, heartened by the encouragement of their centurions, the Roman soldiers link bucklers to form time-honored formation known as the "tortoise." The triumphal arches, the trophies and columns adorned with sculptures of victories won, give them the moral support that makes men strong.

They are fighting to defend the soil of Latin civilization and the stones of Rome, the souvenirs of the empire and the glories of the republic. When their ranks waver, their courage draws new strength from these thoughts, one comparable to that Antaeus received from Mother Earth. Even the Roman women help and support the fighting men. They carry arrows and stones for the slings; they bandage the wounded and calm the dying.

The tumult of galloping hoofs resounds in the Forum. The palace of the emperors is invaded, the doors of convents and dwellings are broken open. The unloosing of barbaric rage on the city of the Caesars causes terrible panics, in which children are crushed

to death and women trampled underfoot. All this lust for murder and loot, so long held in check, can at last glut itself. Since that tragic night when Brennus's Gauls massacred the Senators and raped the Vestal Virgins, Rome had never witnessed so horrible a scene.

Excited by the guttural cries of their chiefs the Goths gallop through the vast empty squares, disturbing the majestic repose of the sanctuaries, smashing precious mosaics, shivering to pieces portals carved in wood, tearing down silken curtains, and lashing beautiful marble effigies with their whips. Some among them hold a dishevelled woman, flinging about her bare arms, on the pommels of their saddles, and snatch up in passing any object that appeals to their greed, a golden vase, an ivory statuette, some precious weapon dedicated to the gods of yore, or the humble family treasure a trembling young girl hugs to her breast. Trampling the corpses, dispatching the wounded, flinging themselves with savage howls on the bodies of the women who resist and shriek, the Goths pass through the appalled city like a horde of demons.

The tempest rages with terrific fury. Pagan temples, struck by lightning, crash to earth, and the statues of gods and emperors, torn from their pedestals, are flung to the ground to break with a crash. It seems that on this awful night the elements are trying to help the Goths destroy the city.

At first encouraged by the aid the storm has given them, the Germans who had entered Rome, impressed by her nocturnal majesty, were ill at ease and viewed the profiles of the monuments — their silhouettes violently projected by the lightnings — with a kind of religious curiosity. In those brief flashes they caught



sight of the white, immovable hosts of statues that peopled the squares and bordered the streets. All things, in the alternating lights and shadows of the tempest, took on a mysterious and threatening aspect. Some among the invaders were crushed by the fall of the roof while they pillaged a temple, others vanished in underground vaults from which they did not reappear. In the livid flare of the lightning and the red reflections of the burning buildings insignificant forms took on the semblance of gigantic phantoms, of nightmare shapes.

Since they had thought that the Romans, dying of hunger, would offer no more than a feeble resistance, they imagine their intrepid adversaries are supernatural beings, or the ghosts of the warriors of old. Even their eagerness to set fire to the houses and to violate the women is troubled by a kind of superstitious awe.

While an atrocious carnage is under way in the greater part of the city, the sound of distant singing is suddenly heard. The bards who, interrupted by the howling of women and the crash of falling walls, have accompanied the invaders and who are drawing shrill chords from their strings as they shout the victories of their forebears, fall silent with stupefaction. The words of a Christian canticle, sung in chorus by a multitude of voices, can be distinguished. Seized with terrified astonishment, the Goths draw aside to let a strange cortège pass by. Preceded by Alaric's bodyguards, who with their whips strike soldiers slow in getting out of their way, a procession of priests and monks marches past on its way to the Basilica of Saint Peter. A crowd of Romans and Goths, commingled and marching side by side, escort it; and, overcome by the

religious majesty of the scene, they sing, each in his own tongue, a powerful and fervent hymn.

Still more superstitious than pious, some of the Goths, watching this incredible sight, cease to slay and loot, and falling on their knees make the sign of the Cross, or — half in curiosity, half in awe — follow the procession.

The contrast between this peaceable procession in a city delivered up to all the horrors of a sack, and the scenes of massacre surrounding it, is extraordinarily strange. From every church that the processional passes come forth priests in sacerdotal robes, carrying sacred vessels and lighted tapers, to join the long-extended crowd of those who march and swell the chorus with their voices.

The Roman believers, glad of this respite, take refuge among the ranks of the ecclesiastics, and even the pagans do not disdain to follow their example. As to the sceptics, they tell themselves that any port is welcome in a storm and, without knowing the words of the canticle, sing as lustily as the rest.

This fantastic event that has stricken the Goths with surprise and respect, had been called forth by a looting officer's discovery of the treasure of Saint Peter. He had entered a house inhabited by some pious women, widows and virgins, who lived there as a kind of monastic order. The Goth used the frightened women roughly, and threatened them with awful tortures if they did not hand over all the gold and silver they possessed. After some hesitation they fetched in a large coffer. He opened it before the dismayed and trembling nuns, and started back, dazzled by the radiance of the gems and precious metals with which it was filled. In it were

chalices adorned with pearls and emeralds, mitres encrusted with rubies *en cabochon*, golden patens, chasuble clasps chiselled and inset with jewels, episcopal rings with amethysts, rubies and great emeralds, monstrances flaming like sunbeams, pyxes of rock-crystal shaped like birds, vessels of onyx and gold, golden statuettes, a great heap of rare and marvellous objects that gleamed and sparkled.

Seeing the Barbarian's stupefaction, one old woman stepped up to him and said: "This is the treasure of Peter the Apostle, and the objects consecrated to his service. I am too weak to defend them. Take them, but do not forget the holy use to which they are destined, and fear Heaven's punishment!"

The woman's majestic attitude and her severe tone impressed the Goth. He replaced the objects he had already taken in the coffer, returned it to its guardians and rejoined Alaric, not without having left a few soldiers to guard the house and to prevent slaves from breaking in to pillage it.

The Balthung viewed with despairing joy the ravages that fire and storm visited upon the city. He had seen triumphal arches and statues crash to the ground. The flames had melted the bronze and scorched the marbles graven with solemn inscriptions. In disregard of his orders the destruction spread, attacking the humblest homes as well as the palaces of the senators. The pagan temples were spared no more than the Christian churches. Only the basilicas of Saint Peter and of Saint Paul, inviolable sanctuaries into which even the raging slaves dared not pursue their victims, were crowded to overflowing with fugitives who filled naves and courts.

The tragic incidents of the night, the fantastic appearance of this city illuminated by the lightning and the glare of the fires, this impression of an almost supernatural cataclysm produced by the storm, had also in some degree troubled the spirit of Alaric. His lieutenants had always been opposed to the conquest of Rome. Some declared that Saint Peter the Apostle would defend it with his angelic cohorts, others affirmed that the statues of the gods would march to protect their temples. The superstition that thus attributed a supernatural guard, half-pagan, half-Christian, to the city, had not abandoned the Goths. They hesitated to enter these sacred edifices, leaving it to the slaves, more familiar with Rome and less sensitive to mystery, to loot the sanctuaries whose precincts they themselves dared not tread.

It would be an act of sacrilege to touch the treasure of Saint Peter, thought Alaric. He sent the officer who had discovered the sacred objects to get together the priests of the neighboring churches. He gave them his own escort in order to protect them from all aggression, and entrusted them with the mission of securing the coffer and carrying it to the Basilica of Saint Peter with all due ceremony.

Priests and deacons thereupon loaded themselves with pyxes and chalices, and marched through Rome, singing and raising them above their heads as though to expose these admirable specimens of the goldsmith's art to the veneration of the people. The glare of the fires flushed the gold with red, made the diamonds sparkle, and, from time to time the lightnings seemed to set trembling with a celestial quiver the flamboyant rays of the monstrosities.

Everywhere along the passage of the procession a kind of truce called forth by surprise and holy awe brought combat to an end. The Romans profited thereby to join the treasure bearers and, won over by the magic fascination of the scene, the Barbarians accompanied them. Never in the course of her history had Rome witnessed so strange a spectacle as this procession, in which the enemies who a moment before had been trying to murder each other walked side by side, their voices mingling in the identical hymn.

It seems that this truce put an end to the massacres and atrocities. After a few hours of battle the exhausted adversaries sought repose. Rome now belonged to Alaric, and all that was left was to organize the occupation.

The population resigned itself to its defeat. All those able to leave the city had fled to Ostia. The numerous vessels that were to have ascended the Tiber having been stopped by the blockade, the fugitives took refuge aboard them, and, at the price of gold, secured transportation to Africa. The unfortunates who had been unable to escape were made prisoners by the Goths, and taxed according to their means. To avoid encumbering his army with useless mouths, Alaric ordered that a modest figure be fixed as their ransom.

The defeated Romans complained that they had been betrayed. It was said that in anticipation of this siege Alaric, while still Attalus's *magister militum*, had given handsome boy slaves to all the senators. The mission of the slaves was to open the city gates at the appointed time and let the Gothic army enter. It was also rumored that the family of the Anicii, in order to avenge itself for the disgrace in which it had languished



since Attalus's coronation, had delivered Rome up to the invader. Some declared that one of the women of this illustrious family, Proba Faltonia, had herself opened the Salarian Gate, not in betrayal but out of pity, to spare the inhabitants the torment of a protracted siege.

A thousand anecdotes, credible and incredible, circulated with regard to the atrocious cruelty of the Goths. The names of famous victims were mentioned, Marcella, the friend of Saint Jerome, a pious and charitable widow, whom the Barbarians had beaten to death with clubs, together with her ward Principia, and many others. One met dishevelled women who sought their children in the streets with cries of despair, and parents who dug among the ruins of their homes in order to disinter some beloved corpse.

The captives had been herded together in the *fora*, the public squares. Sometimes they saw Alaric ride by in his leather jacket, his multicolored breeches and his helmet with aurochs horns. In this Barbarian they could no longer recognize the Roman officer they had beheld at Attalus's side, proud of his sculptured corselet and his general's belt of command. The soldiers ordered to collect the spoils made requisitions in all houses, and dragged out valuables of all sorts, jewels, clothing and furniture. All the carts and wagons in the city were confiscated to carry off the immense booty.

The picture of ruin offered by a whole quarter of Rome, that near the Porta Salaria, through which the Goths had entered, the stench of the corpses, the foul smoke of the smoldering ruins, the horrible shambles in the squares and streets, filled Alaric's heart with savage sadness. It was not thus that he had wanted to

rule the city of the Caesars. His fate had constrained him to destroy when he only wished to serve. He felt a proud bitterness when he told himself that in the future his name would be immortal, but that men would recall it only with loathing.

He was eager to leave this abominable scene of desolation. His officers shared his impatience, because they apprehended an offensive on the part of the Ravenna army, or — who knows? — the anger of the gods. Saint Peter and Saint Paul should bear them no ill will, seeing that their sanctuaries and treasures had been spared, but the pagan divinities whose temples had been devastated, would they not seek revenge? A huge statue of Mars that they had not dared to cast down terrified them with the menacing frown of beetling brows above empty eyes. Whenever they passed the god's image, they bowed their heads before that angry face, that massive fist raised to the skies to strike or curse.

When the methodical pillage of the houses had been completed, and the captives had ransomed themselves according to their means, Alaric no longer cared to remain in the malign city. It seemed to him that evil spirits, born of its smoking, pestiferous ruins, were assembling against him. Baleful omens alarmed him. He drove on the laggards and ordered the departure.

The Goths had remained in Rome only three days. They bore off some captives of high birth, among them the daughter of Theodosius, Galla Placidia. Alaric had refused to accept a ransom for her. He had given her to his brother-in-law Athäulf, who had fallen in love with her and wanted to marry her.

## XVIII: RELAPSE INTO BARBARISM

THE fall of Rome plunged the empire into terror and consternation. The only man indifferent to it was the Emperor Honorius. When a panting messenger brought him the awful news, "Rome is lost!" Theodosius's son showed a momentary touch of feeling and answered, much distressed: "How can that be possible—I only fed her a few minutes ago?" When it was explained to him that the capital of the Caesars, and not one of his pullets that had been given the same name, was meant, he was reassured, uttered a sigh of relief and regained his calmness. The unfortunate monarch, obsessed by intrigues since childhood, tyrannized over by his ministers, and overwhelmed by the burden of a rule and responsibilities too heavy to bear, was not altogether deprived of intelligence. But his counsellors had been so careful to keep him ignorant that, stultified, deafened and worried by suppliants, he found peace and tranquillity only in the innocent domestic occupation of raising chickens, and his ministers were only too glad not to interfere with a hobby that left the government and administration of the empire in their hands.

Saint Augustine in Hippo and Saint Jerome in his monastery of Bethlehem, informed of the catastrophe, regarded it as a divine chastisement. The refugees who sought refuge in Northern Africa increased in numbers. While the Italian peasants and men without the law hurried to Rome to search for loot the Goths

had overlooked, and to install themselves in the houses that still remained standing, those among the inhabitants who had escaped slavery and had been spared in the massacre, left the country open to the enemy. In the imperial cities of the African coast they hoped to find a refuge with Heraclianus, the governor who had offered so energetic a resistance to Attalus's expedition.

Unfortunately, this magistrate thought only of the profit he could derive from the newcomers. He made them surrender all the money they had brought with them for permission to establish themselves in his province, then sent for the slave dealers in those parts and sold to them all these poor wretches who had fled from the Goths — only to fall into the still more grasping hands of this governor of their own race and into the possession of Syrian traffickers in human bodies.

If it be true that the outward and visible signs of civilization conceal without destroying the primitive instincts of barbarism, then Alaric's army, after the sack of Rome, offered a curious example of the fact. Only the will of their chief and his Romanization maintained among the ranks of his soldiery an order that, at the time of Attalus's entry into Rome, had put their regiments on a level with the legions. This Romanization, the chief characteristic of Alaric's psychology, had not made any deeper impress on the habits of his people, nor perhaps on his own personality. His fervent passion for Rome was a matter of sentiment, of ambition, of admiration — not of reason. Hence it was susceptible of being overthrown by some other passion, more — or as — violent, that might take its place.

In order to understand the character of the Barba-

rian peoples of that time, one must always compare the two outstanding figures of the age, Alaric and Stilicho. It is a comparison that shows the notable difference due to the lapse of a single generation. Comparing these two Romanized Barbarians one distinction stands out as the dominant factor: Stilicho was a Roman in the *second degree*, while Alaric was one only in the *first degree*. At the time when the father of the Regent of the Occident, as has already been mentioned, commanded the "hairy squadrons" in the service of Rome, the father of Alaric was leading a horde of Goths through the Danubian forests, fighting against the Alans, and fleeing from the Huns. Stilicho at birth was *part of Rome*: Alaric became a Roman only by accident, following the entrance of the Goths into the empire, and his own incorporation into one of the regiments of auxiliaries. Perhaps, had he also been a Roman of the second generation, Alaric would have been willing to serve the empire without his ambition making him wish to become its master, and, at home in political intrigue, and better acquainted with the character of the politicians, he might have tempered his admiration with the practical knowledge due to experience.

The Balthung's chief fault was that he waxed enthusiastic about a land which he knew only from hearsay, and whose most dangerous interpreters, the poets and historians, he had consulted. We do not know the exact date of his birth, but since he already took part as an officer in the war against Eugenius in 392 A.D., we may take it that he was at least twenty years old at that time. Hitherto he had seen nothing but Roman victories, and the prestige of Theodosius dazzled the Barbarians,



who venerated that Emperor. All this concurred to arouse a fervor that his first disappointment, the exile to Moesia at the moment when he expected to be advanced in rank, had been unable to dampen. It had, on the contrary, deprived him of a stay in Rome or Constantinople that would inevitably have destroyed his illusions.

His mistake consisted in misunderstanding the Roman empire, of judging it according to its past, instead of only taking into account its actual condition. The ages of decadence did not count for him, so splendid was the glory reflected by the reign of Theodosius, under whom he had fleshed his maiden sword. In the misunderstandings that divide foreign countries time is the main factor that confuses. Two lands whose boundaries adjoin, but that do not live at the same tempo nor in the same rhythm, may be separated by a gap of several centuries, morally and intellectually, while materially they share the same decade, and two-thirds of the same boundary line.

Unaware of this temporal lack of balance, Alaric's imagination dwelt in a Rome that had long before disappeared. This is an error of perspective common to a naturalized national in the first degree, whereas it is one that the naturalized national in the second degree, better informed, and one of the second generation, spontaneously avoids. Stilicho knew that he was living in the Rome of Honorius, and tried to make the best he could of the fact in the country's interest. Herein he benefitted by his father's experience and his own childhood observation. Brusquely transplanted from the nomad chariot, from a Danubian island bristling with pines to the ranks of the best imperial cavalry squad-

rons, Alaric quite honestly believed he was following the standards of Caesar.

He was literally undone by an optical illusion. If, instead of insisting on being a Roman, he had done for the Goths and their kindred nations what Attila was later to do for the Huns; if, as Stilicho feared he might do, he had formed a great Barbarian confederation whose king he would have become, then, no doubt — possessing an intelligence and military qualities lacking in the other German chiefs — he would have overthrown the empire, or, at least, have wrung from it concessions and a *modus vivendi* that would have satisfied his ambition.

Passion, unfortunately, got the better of reason, and it was necessary for the combination to suffer several setbacks in order to convince him, in the end, that his fate was not to be bound up with that of the empire. When he realized this, after his final negotiations with Honorius, it was too late. Destiny had accorded him too brief a life to permit him to begin existence over again with a new ideal.

The Goths had never clearly understood their chief. Only Athäulf, won over, perhaps, by his brother-in-law's example and exhortations, shared his desire for Romanization. The rest remained Goths, that is to say, soldiers of fortune, always as ready to fight as to maraud, and ruled by one desire — that of conforming to the martial traditions of their race, without, it goes without saying, neglecting the agreeable accessory of pillage.

Hence Alaric had followed his policies in spite of, and often contrary to, his people. Several times in the course of his reign, his subjects, unaware of the mo-

tives prompting his acts, and incapable of reconciling them with their own feelings, had threatened to revolt. The Emperors meant something to them only because their effigies appeared on the coins of their army pay: it was the gold or silver piece that interested them, not the profile that adorned it. A further proof of their indifference was the absence of national feeling that allowed them to oppose each other in enemy armies. The Barbarian peoples were so scattered, so broken up into fragmentary units, that tribes might be found serving under every banner raised. Chance or the pay offered, not the personality of the leader or the shape of his standard, determined their choice. Alaric's Goths obeyed him because he was a Balthung of royal blood, and because many chiefs of clans were united to his own by the ties of vassalage. Yet this did not prevent other Goths from simultaneously serving Constantine, Stilicho, Gainas, Tribigild, Sarus and Radagaisus. They were to be found in Spain, Britain, Gaul and Africa, and even among the Huns, who had formed an alliance with King Berig's laggards, the Gepidae.

Alaric had not tried to arouse in his subjects the feeling of nationality they lacked. Nor had he attempted to make them share his love for Rome: they would not have understood him, and from the day that their chief's words became unintelligible to them, he would have lost at the same time his prestige and his power.

Hence his Romanization, so far as the Goths were concerned, was confined to a simple change of arms, equipment and method of fighting. In their chief's case it went deeper, yet was equally at the mercy of events.

The taking of Rome by Alaric was a species of despairing rape, and his brutal possession was enough to

slay his admiration and his love. The fascination that the mere name "empire" had exerted on him, disappeared that day when he saw his soldiers' bonfires blacken the marble of the triumphal arches, and the statues of the emperors shattered on the pavements of the squares. The slow, impassioned crystallization that since childhood had invested his idea of Rome with a supernatural grandeur, was destroyed the very moment he attained the object of his desire. He had taken Rome because she refused to give herself to him, and he derived neither joy nor pride from his conquest.

While his soldiers gazed with delight at the spoils that filled their wagons, and Athäulf at his heart's desire, Alaric — who cared little for the magic treasure of Solomon, brought from Jerusalem by Titus, and forming his share of the booty — left the devastated city filled with the bitterness of a great deception. It was the most dolorous of all deceptions, that of the conqueror who seizes a long coveted object, yet not in the way he had dreamt of taking it.

The melancholy of the conqueror is at times attributed to his insatiable ambitions, to an appetite that never grows less. Yet this is only true in part, and the real tragedy of success lies in the inevitable disproportion, not so much between the dream and its realization, as between the nature of the dream and the nature of its realization. And here, as in all else, the goal is less important than the road by which it is reached.

Loaded down with a fabulous booty — for the Solomonic treasure in every one's mouth consisted of all the wealth of the Palatine, augmented by the spoils of the entire Near East — Alaric, riding at the head of his victorious army, felt only that terrible emptiness,

that absolute impoverishment, that follows upon the shattering of an ideal.

This passion dead, however, another was to replace it. Admiration was succeeded by hatred, devotion by cruelty. Incapable of entering into their chief's emotional tragedy, the Goths rejoiced in his metamorphosis. They had always somewhat resented their king's "playing the Roman." Their pride of race placed a Balthung far above any emperor. The one as well as the other descended from a god, so it was said, but was there any comparison between Balder, the omnipotent, incarnate in the supreme forces of Nature, and the Roman divinities, petrified in marble statues? The Goths' recently acquired Christianity allowed them to retain all that in their old faith was concerned with their national traditions. They had burned their idols, but the descendant of Balder retained for them a supernatural prestige. Had this not been the case would they have so long endured his strange whimsies?

In their eyes Alaric had lessened in stature by Romanizing himself. To see him once more wearing the bronze helmet and fur mantle of his ancestors, re-established him in the majesty that was truly his. It delighted them all the more that this *regothization* on their chief's part put an end to those inexplicable prohibitions he had imposed on them, and once more authorized the pillage that was their joy. The march through Campagna turned out to be an advantageous expedition for the Goths. Entrenched behind the marshes and pine-woods of Ravenna, the imperial army remained invisible. In spite of his rodомontades, Sarus, promoted to the rank of *magister militum*, was not over-eager to begin hostilities with his compatriot. Cam-



pagna, delivered up to the Goths, was methodically devastated. Happy at being able to indulge their love for depredation, and undisturbed by Alaric's former pitiless prohibitions, they acquired many articles of value and a multitude of slaves. Their chief seemed to have lost interest in what happened to the captured cities.

They took advantage of this condition to attack priests and churches, something they had never dared do before. When they took possession of Nola, its bishop, the illustrious Paulinus, renowned for his scholarship and piety, implored Alaric to be merciful, but he was deaf to the supplications. Not only did he allow his Goths to loot and devastate Nola, but he did not stop them even when they laid hands on Paulinus. The unfortunate prelate was reputed to be immensely wealthy, but actually had kept nothing of his considerable possessions, for in his charity he had distributed all he had among the poor. The Goths, refusing to credit his generosity, seized and despoiled him, and beat him severely, to make him tell where he had hidden his supposed fortune. After this last shift, they left him wounded and half-dead when they had to abandon Nola.

The other cities along their line of march shared Nola's fate. Given up to the joys of pillage and destruction, the Goths did not trouble to find out whither their king was leading them. After many years they were so used to these warrior journeys that a calm, sedentary existence bored them. They delighted in the hazards of battle, in the long marches along the highway, in the changing aspect of men and lands. When King Berig, in the old days had sailed away with their ancestors in

three ships, it had been to find a fertile land wherein to settle down, but the vagabond existence first necessarily imposed on them because they were rejected by all other nations, had finally become a racial tradition. Their character had adapted itself to the exigencies of this new life, and they now asked nothing better than these slow promenades of the wagons across shifting countrysides, that afforded them the joys of battle, the glamour of glory and the profit of pillage.

Thus they traversed all Lucania, then Brutium, and came to a halt in Calabria. The chiefs of clans knew nothing of what their king had in mind. It was only when the army reached Reggio that Alaric revealed his intentions.

A people's fate is not always decided in its own land. The vast extent of the Roman empire, the diversity of the provinces composing it, had conditioned a state of reciprocal interdependence that had to be taken into account. Italy was no longer able to furnish the men needed for the army, nor the food required for the troops and the civil population. She depended on Gaul, the Balkan countries and Germany for the recruiting of her squadrons, and whenever her communications with Northern Africa were cut she ran the risk of dying of hunger. The sack of Rome had disgusted Alaric with undertakings decided by brute force. His refinement of character and his cultural acquisitions always offset the hereditary instincts of barbarism in his nature. His weakness was that he was no longer altogether a Goth, yet had not altogether become a Roman. He represented a state of transition, the transition from barbarism to civilization. This dual personality urged him alternately to indulge in what might be called

“super-civilized” actions, such as his day at Athens, and barbaric gestures, like the sack of Rome.

Yet while a true Barbarian, such as Radagaisus for instance, would have profited by his stay in Italy to despoil the whole country, satisfied to let impregnable Ravenna alone, Alaric on the contrary took no interest in Italy, which he abandoned to his soldiers, and kept his eye fixed solely on Ravenna. He could not capture it by besieging its morasses and digging trenches across its pine forests. A people always depends on the land that feeds it. To gain Ravenna he would have to strike Northern Africa.

This conquest that he had ceaselessly urged on Atalus, and that this silly monarch had made abortive by his obstinacy in refusing to send the troops needed, Alaric meant to undertake once more, this time on his own account. The system of “small detachments” had been proven a disastrous failure by Heraclianus’s powerful defences. Hence it would be necessary to undertake a great offensive and overwhelm Africa with the whole Gothic army in order to crush the Romans. Once the wheat harvests produced by these regions failed to reach Italy, then — even though the walls of Ravenna and the army guarding it remained intact — the empire would be lost.

Perhaps this was the golden opportunity to conquer the peoples that had hitherto escaped the Roman yoke. Alaric already visioned a great African empire, stretching from the shores of the Mediterranean to the immemorial cities of mystery lying beyond the desert. In the Roman armies he had seen black horsemen with woolly hair, clad in thin stuffs, who carried slender lances and osier shields, and who came from countries

bearing unfamiliar names. The wild beasts that were hunted in the Circus were captured in those distant lands, and it was said that they also contained all sorts of monstrous creatures, men with but a single great foot that they used as a shelter from the sun, and women like fishes. There unicorns and basilisks were plentiful, the waters of the rivers rolled down gold, and enormous rocks of ruby and emeralds projected dazzlingly from the sands.

This African empire, these unknown lands, he would some day possess. He was still young enough not to set a limit to his ambition. For the moment, however, his aim was to starve Italy by preventing Africa from nourishing her. With that end in view he meant to overwhelm Heraclianus beneath the irresistible avalanche of the horde.

## XIX: THE FLEET OF WORLD CONQUEST

**H**APPY Berig, whose three ships had sufficed to transport his whole people! What a fleet would not Alaric need to embark his soldiers with their women and children, their horses and their chariots, from which they never parted, together with all their possessions!

The Gothic army had once more become an immense multitude. During his second siege of Rome and in the reign of Attalus, Alaric had caused all the families that had remained in Epirus during his second invasion to come to Italy. This multitude must have comprised some three to four hundred thousand individuals. It was necessary, however, to transport it to Africa, for if the women and children were left in Italy while his soldiers were fighting Heraclianus, they would be exposed without defence to Roman attack. On the other hand, to leave troops to protect them would deprive the expedition of indispensable regiments. It is all too easy to defend a coast against assailants if the latter can draw no profit from their main advantage, surprise. It was necessary to overwhelm the African garrisons with a mass capable of crushing them at the first blow and, to that end, not to divide the Gothic army.

Given the minimal tonnage of ships in those days, an adventure like the one Alaric projected seems almost chimerical. Yet the Balthung had decided to risk it, as much to show the Senate that he would succeed



where their Emperor Attalus had failed, as to assure the success of his tactics. The key to the empire lay not in a fortress, but in a granary. He would close the granary.

His lieutenants had been surprised because, during the march from Reggio to Rome, their chief, ordinarily opposed to the presence of useless mouths, had recommended them to bring with them all men fit to bear arms they found along the route. They had been ordered to treat and to feed well all captives who were carpenters or smiths by trade. By employing this precaution Alaric wished to make sure of the workmen he would need to build his fleet. The Calabrian population whose services he requisitioned were surprised by the extraordinary appearance of the Gothic camp, set up on the seashore. Once the defensive ring of wagons had been crossed one was confronted by an immense shipyard for naval construction.

The majority of ships in the Italian ports had already hoisted sail and plied oar to reach Sicily or Carthage even before the arrival of the Goths. The transportation of Roman refugees was a lucrative business, and the sea-captains were growing rich by filling their holds and decks with innumerable fugitives who often, to pay the cost of their voyage, had to give up all they possessed. In this way the jewels and money that had escaped the rapine of the Goths passed into the greedy hands of the sailors. Never had ships' cargoes paid a better return!

So it happened that Alaric found very few ships in the Calabrian ports he visited. Those that had been abandoned were in the main quite unseaworthy, stove in by rocks, eaten away by shipworms, and leaking through

every seam. They offered no solution of the problem of transporting the whole Gothic people to Africa. Four hundred thousand human beings, plus horses and wagons — how many ships would be needed? Undismayed by the unsurmountable difficulty, the Balthung assembled all the ships he could find, from heavy galleys to little barks, not forgetting tartans and xebecs. Those that were unseaworthy were to be repaired, and new ones built until there were enough to house the Goths and their nomad dwellings.

For the first time the battle-axe becomes a carpenter's tool in the soldier's hand. Keels are laid down, on the model of the ships already in their possession. While part of the prisoners are sent to cut trees in the near-by forests, others put up the scaffolding to support the timbers. The horses, unharnessed and unsaddled, drag the heavy tree trunks. The women sew sails, heat pitch, and make long oars. When the sailcloth runs out, they take the silken stuffs of the Roman tribute, and robes and tunics are stitched together into vast multicolored squares, to catch whatever wind Fortune may send the Goths.

Turned into quartermasters and shipyard foremen, the Barbarian princes direct the woodchoppers and carpenters. The eagle-wing helmet and fur mantles, inconvenient while working, have disappeared. In leather coats with sleeves rolled up, letting their hair grow, the Goths busy themselves with this new work. At first they had complained, protesting that it was work for slaves and not for warriors, but they were told about rivers of gold, rocks of jewels and fabulous animals. Alaric had said that for the nonce his people's future was on the sea. No more is needed to make

every one work in the shipyards. Even the children, delighted with the new game, run hither and yon, carrying nails, bolts and small bits of wood.

Among this crowd of improvised workmen carpenters are rare, and ships' carpenters are even rarer. Yet so great is the general good will and enthusiasm that these characteristics seem to take the place of technical competence. In spite of this, however, the work progresses slowly. The poorly balanced scaffoldings break down, carrying with them the half-finished hulls. There is more disorder and bustle than real activity. The effort of a whole people cannot replace the technique of experts.

How many months did they continue to toil? The uncertain chronology of that day does not inform us. It must have been a long time, if one take into consideration the number of passengers and the quantity of freight the fleet was to carry.

In the course of several centuries the Goths had become essentially a nation of landmen, yet they had inherited the virtues of a sea-faring ancestry, they were still the brothers of those vikings who, at that time, began "harrying over the seas" in their "long ships" with dragons' heads for prows. The transformation that for any other nation would have seemed impossible merely returned the descendants of King Berig's companions to their natural occupation.

Alaric, however, felt as much inquietude as pride when he examined the vessels that they built. The boats would have called forth laughter in any proper shipyard, but here it was impossible to look without emotion at these nondescript barks, with their clumsily hewn and awkwardly joined timbers. They were a

strange sight, these ships that a people had built with all its heart, and without the least knowledge of the elements of the shipbuilder's art.

With the vessels he had discovered in the seaports, Athäulf formed a small corsair squadron, that cruised along the coast and fell upon anything with sails imprudent enough to approach it. These prizes made a useful addition to the fleet in process of construction, and were triumphantly brought back to the port of Reggio, where numerous vessels were already riding at anchor.

Every day the gang foremen would surround Alaric and announce that they had completed another galley. Then the king would go to the shipyard, admire the clean wooded keel and felicitate his workmen. His presence reanimated the weary, encouraged the indolent and stimulated the zeal of all. At times he would seize an axe and himself slice off long yellow splinters from some heavy beam. That roused the workmen to enthusiasm, and they would fall to singing their chorus — an old battle-chant whose rhythm had been modified to suit the cadence of plane and axe — with even greater zest.

The Sicilians, informed of these maritime preparations, were afraid they might be directed against them. They had been more or less indifferent to the activities of the Goths while they confined their operations to the peninsula. They had taken in many refugees who, describing the atrocities they had suffered or witnessed, gave the happy inhabitants of the island a chance to sympathize with them while congratulating themselves on the good luck that had placed an arm of the sea between them and these redoubtable invaders. Their

uneasiness began the very day that the Goths started to build ships. Were they, too, to experience the horrors that had drenched Italy with blood? In their terror they invoked the protection of the patron saints of the island, and to conciliate the support of all the gods, they carried offerings of fruits, honey and wine to an ancient statue, venerated for centuries, and respected by popular devotion in spite of imperial edicts and fanatic zeal.

It was a strange stone image, no doubt brought from the Orient by navigators of former days. An ever burning fire glowed at one of its feet, by the other stood a vessel filled with water. Thanks to this arrangement, the statue, it was said, would guard Sicily against the fury of fire, that is to say, volcanic eruptions, and also preserve it from any dangers that might threaten it by sea, the incursions of pirates, and invasions. The Christian bishops had not ventured to cast down this ancient image, for popular belief linked the fate of the island with the presence of this unknown deity. The cult of the statue experienced a redoubling of offerings and fervor owing to the proximity of the Goths. With respectful terror the Sicilians gazed at the savage expression of the coarsely hewn features, the short and massive arms, the powerful body, and the broad shoulders of the squat image.

At last the fleet was built. An incalculable number of ships of every kind, form and dimension rode the waves before the port of Reggio. On the prow of each and every one was carved a dragon's head like that which had formerly adorned the King Berig's barks. The wind toyed with the multicolored sails, where the Tyrian purple cloth stolen at Athens and the silken



garments delivered by Rome were clumsily sewn to old remnants of sailcloth.

With impatience Alaric regarded this fleet that was to allow him to conquer Africa, and, as a result, deliver up the empire to him. Just as formerly, the Goths, deprived of their arms, had made them swords and axes with the iron of their wagon wheels, so to-day they had created this immense armada that was to bear them to the opposite shore of the Mediterranean.

The wagons, horses, provisions and forage necessary for the transit were put aboard. Then the women and children were crowded into the vessels. The warriors were the last to cross the gangplanks. Before leaving Italy all captives not needed to man the oars of the galleys were released.

Galloping along the shore from ship to ship, Alaric superintended the lashing fast of the wagons and the installation of the horses. The guidance of each ship was entrusted to a chief who had hastily learned the elementary principles of navigation.

Already a few vessels completely loaded were putting out from shore, rocked by a gentle breeze that filled their sails. One after another the ships left port. Alaric wished to stay ashore until all was over; he would sail on the last ship to go.

Suddenly, as though evoked by the Sicilian idol with the fierce and obtuse face, a violent squall struck the fleet. The sea that had hitherto been calm at once began to toss in tremendous waves, and one of those unexpected storms that surprise the sailor broke off the Calabrian coast without warning.

Well-built ships, captained by experienced mariners, might have braved the tempest. But the Gothic ships

were not meant to dare a raging sea. While the gust of wind whirled up and tore off the sails, the top-heavy and clumsily freighted vessels dipped and capsized. The waves inundated the holds, swallowing the open, undecked hulks, and broke the galleys one against the other.

That portion of the fleet still within the harbor had hastily cast anchor and disembarked its passengers, who ran up and down the shore uttering despairing cries and lamentations.

From the strand Alaric witnessed the destruction of the fleet that had been built at the cost of so much effort, and that had promised him the possession of the empire. Nothing could be more distressing than to watch in utter impotence the wrecking of these ships to which he had entrusted his fortunes. With their aid, so he had thought, destiny was to carry him to lands unknown, to blaze the trail for victories that would restore his self-confidence, his love of risk and adventure.

How fondly he had watched the builders' daily progress! With what enthusiastic exclamations had not his soldiers shown him these ill-built barks, that for them and for him were more precious than anything shaped by master-carpenters, because a whole people had built them with its faith, its will to win, its confidence in its leader!

The well-nigh religious madness of the Berserk overcame him at the sound of the hulls crashing against the rocks. In a fit of blind fury, shouting blasphemies, he drew his sword and threatened the heavens. He delivered sweeping blows in empty air, as though to strike the maleficent spirits of the wind. He cursed the sea whose treacherous calmness had lured out his vessels

only to swallow them in its treacherous maw. Huge tears filled his eyes. To a disappointment but just overcome was added a newer and greater one. Were all men and all gods banded against him?

His officers observed their chief's despair with terror. When, his paroxysm past, he dropped his sword and himself fell almost lifeless, they raised him up and carried him from the shore.

With a single glance he had taken in the whole extent of the terrific devastation. Of the vessels built with so much zeal and enthusiasm there remained only battered hulls, and flotsam and jetsam adrift among a multitude of corpses. With great difficulty some of the shipwrecked had regained the shore, but the disaster was beyond repair. A great part of the Gothic people had perished in the tempest: the survivors were exhausted, discouraged and demoralized. Not with the soldiers left him could Alaric attempt the conquest of Africa, even taking for granted that he had the patience and resources needed to build another fleet.

Perhaps at this time he recalled the prophecy that had greeted him in the depths of the Thessalian grove: "You will reach Rome!" He had reached Rome and taken it. Was it not a sign that his career had ended, that he would go no further?

The wrecking of his ideal, the downfall of his ambitions that had gotten the better of all his efforts, could only be made good by a brilliant victory. Since the sack of Rome he no longer felt that buoyant hope and enthusiasm that had previously upborne him. While sustained by his ideal he had discounted his defeat at Pollentia, and the retreat that followed it, when his army, starving and exhausted, had been har-

assed by the Italian population. He had so well persuaded himself he was a Roman and nothing but a Roman that when he was obliged to put off this artificial personality; he had found to take its place within himself nothing that enabled him to substitute for the figure of Alaricus an authentically Barbarian Alariks.

The building of the fleet, that he had wished personally to supervise, had caused him much fatigue. The treacherous fevers that haunted the Calabrian coast had, in addition, provoked frequent attacks of illness that had exhausted him.

In the state of physical demoralization and weakness in which he found himself the destruction of the fleet seemed a decisive and irreparable catastrophe. He was still young, no more than forty-five, yet he no longer possessed that will to live that gives one strength to triumph over every setback. Like all the men of his race, who pass swiftly from exultation to despondency, Alaric was stricken to earth by this misfortune in which he also saw the vengeance of Rome's protecting gods and a warning of fate.

## XX: "THE PATH OF GLORY . . ."

**B**URNING with fever, the King furiously shakes the furs that cover him. In his delirium he utters cries of rage and enthusiasm whose meaning the chiefs surrounding him cannot fathom. Since sickness has stretched out Alaric, the princes of the Gothic nation and the captains of the clans have given way to utter despair. The destruction of the fleet has stricken their superstitious souls with a fear as unreasoning as it is invincible. In vain the ancients skilled in remedies make the sick king drink their strange potions, in vain the bards try to rouse him with their martial songs from the torpor into which he relapses as soon as the fury of the fever has left him. In vain his most devoted friends try to stimulate his interest in life by showing him the things they think may interest him. Athäulf has the Solomonic treasure and the countless precious spoils of Greece and Rome brought to his couch. With an effort the sick man opens his eyes, and his feeble hand pushes away all that is offered him. The tellers of tales seek to distract him, but he does not listen to them. A sword is handed him, to reanimate his courage, but he lets it slip from his grip.

Silence now lies heavy on the Gothic camp. No sooner have the death-keens for the victims of the shipwreck of the fleet died away than nothing is heard in the tents and wagons but whispers of alarm. The physicians shake their heads when questioned with regard to the king's illness. They say that his sickness



is one of those that preclude recovery, and that their spells and potions have no effect on it. When a man no longer cares to live and renounces life, Death sits down at his bedside and will not leave him.

Alaric's captains feel that their master is already far removed from them. Memories of his splendid rides, his passion for conquest, his dreams of ambition, no longer wake an echo in this spirit wrung down by fever and despair. He is aware of the malady that is slowly devouring him, but he has neither the strength nor the wish for that act of the will which would allow him to fight, to resist. To him all seems vain, he has been crushed by the power of events, and men do not seem worthy of the effort to continue living among them.

The centenarian who first taught him to hold the bow tries to arrest this acquiescent and vertiginous descent into the abyss of death by appealing to his chieftain's pride: "What will become of the Goths when you are no longer here?" he asks. And Alaric murmurs Athäulf's name, to indicate that he is to be chosen to succeed him.

For some days past the Goths have realized that they no longer have a king. His body is still in their midst, he breathes, he moves, but his soul is withdrawn from all earthly things, delivered from all fetters of ambition and desire. When he saw his fleet destroyed by the tempest he prayed that the lightning might strike him then and there. It was then that the idea of death had taken hold of him, and death had only to struggle with his body, still rebellious and unconsciously clinging to life: his soul had surrendered and made its covenant with the power that denies, the power of nothingness.

With anguish of heart the whole Gothic nation watched this terrible game of death and the man. This was no swift blow of the axe that cleanly cut the thread of life, no arrow that pierced the heart, no gush of blood that carried the spirit with it on its stream. It was something far more tragic, the cruel toying of an invincible force with an impotent human being. Death struggled long with their king's body. Was Balder the god, his family's ancestor, lending him divine support? Every day a band of warriors came to beg the dying man to will to live. Instinct told them that if his will power were roused, and he were to say, "No!" death would retreat. Swords clashed against swords about him, the Barbarians spun on their heels, and stamped their feet, dropping into their old war dances, rhythmized by chants and cries, whose suggestive power was so great that even a dying man might rise and also swing sword or bow. They imprisoned the sick man in a circle of violent gestures and clamors that would have driven away death, were not death already lying close beside — almost within — his victim. Priests implored the intercession of the saints; magicians burned sacred herbs in bronze bowls, one could hear the sobbing of flutes and the roll of drums. The entire horde identified itself with its king, offering him its own wish to live, its strength and its enthusiasm.

The warriors whirl wildly about the couch, uttering hoarse cries that are taken up by the Goths throughout the camp, cries that make the horses tremble as they recognize the old nomad call, clamoring of battle and the charge. One day one of them suggests taking the sick king out of Italy, to the pine forests where the waves of the Danube can be heard as they flow. The

suggestion is discussed at length. Formerly, before the battle of Pollentia, the Balthung had said that, dead or alive, he would not leave Italy. Those anxious to respect their chief's wish oppose those who want to take him back to the air of his natal land, to the wide open spaces, the plains, the forests, the great rivers.

But their solicitude is useless at this hour. Indifferent to their wrangling, with a last gesture of lassitude and renunciation, Alaric has agreed to the final victory of death, who has furiously twisted his icy body in a last spasm.

Then the warriors cease dancing and, one by one, leave the tent. The news spreads through the camp and shrill wails resound. In all the wagons, around all the fires, there are tears and lamentations. Before the entrance to the royal house, its pole broken, hangs the standard bearing the Balthung's insignia.

It is a great plaint of sadness and admiration, mingled with memories of battle and glory. They can still see their king, during the attack of the Thessalians, hurrying the wagons across the ford of the Peneus, fighting almost single-handed against the mountaineers ambushed behind the rocks. They remember how he stopped the Alans when the latter had stormed the camp at Pollentia, on Good Friday. And they evoke the long and dolorous retreat, the second triumphal return to Italy and the taking of Rome.

The whole nation had incarnated its ideals, its dreams and its ambitions in this man. He had become the collective soul of his race, the bearer of its hopes and its enthusiasms. Was he not descended from the most beautiful among the gods, and had he not done superhuman deeds?

Those annals that were never set down, yet were destined to live in the memory of the Goths until effaced by inevitable oblivion, collected the traits that were to make a heroic figure, and aggrandized them into the triumphant unreality of mythic legend. The bardic poets recalled the days of victory, they retold the passage of the ice-bound mountains, the sack of cities, the terror of the enemy, and the tall figure of the Balthung riding at the head of the horde.

In their songs the dead man took on a new life, not one corruptible and easily stricken down by fever and despair, but one splendid and radiant, victorious over evil. All his abnormal and artificial Romanization vanished, and there remained only the Barbarian chieftain, the master of his nation, the leader of men.

No one understood him, neither the Romans nor the Goths, and when the Latin world gave a sigh of relief at learning of his death, it was unaware that this German had loved and admired the empire more passionately than any citizen of the old Roman stock.

Since Alaric's death the Gothic camp presents a scene of strange activity. Slaves are busy carrying earth and stones, and in spite of their disdain for manual labor the Goths themselves hasten to share in this inexplicable task. They have drawn up their wagons and set up their tents near the Busento, a river that descends from the mountains of Calabria, and flows not far from Cosenza. Is it to search this river bed for alluvial gold that all, warriors and slaves, are working to raise a strong dike across its current, and digging a long canal through the pine forest that shadows this loop winding around the Barentino? The canal rejoins the bed of the stream a few hundred yards lower down.





Alaric's Burial in the Bed of the Busento





They dig with precipitate haste. While the men tear out rocks and stones, the women carry them off in their skirts and the children cast them into the forest. Soon arrested by the dike and detoured from its normal course, the river hurls itself into the artificial bed dug for it.

This tremendous piece of work has been carried out in a few days' time. All the Goths and their prisoners have been ceaselessly active in the superhuman attempt to change the course of a river and lay dry its bottom.

They do not understand why they must perform this task that seems useless and absurd, but their chiefs drive them on with cries and blows, and push along the work. For the leaders know that they are preparing Alaric's tomb.

When the corpse, clad in its warrior dress, had been laid beneath the tent before which hung the fragments of the broken standard, his officers, chiefs of clans and allied princes had held the death watch over their king. They would have been glad to carry him with them, in their long cavalcades, as a talisman of victory. They would have been glad to look again at that once vigorous frame, worn with fever and suffering, at those hollow features harshly modelled by the hand of Fate. But Athäulf, who is now King of the Goths, has decided that as the Balthung wished, his body shall rest in that Italy he had so passionately desired. But, they had asked him, where is the tomb worthy of receiving this glorious corpse? Where is the sepulchre wherein his mortal remains may count on enjoying the eternal peace of the dead? If the Goths are some day forced to leave the land, will not the Italians take advantage of their departure to profane their chief's remains?

In council assembled the notables of the nation discussed the choice of a royal burying place. One suggested digging so deep a well that none could ever violate the corpse. Another said that the king's body should be burned on an immense pyre. It was Alaric's old tutor in arms, the warrior who had first held him in the saddle, who recalled to them that isle of Peuce where the Balthung had been born. Covered with pine trees — as its name, "The Fir," indicates — surrounded by the swift waves of the Danube, it had been the point of departure of his glorious career. The waves had played an important part in the chieftain's life. He spoke of the Peneus, where in spite of the Thessalians' attack, Alaric had rallied his disordered squadrons; of the Po, where the horsemen he led had followed him at a gallop over the grinding ice; of the Tiber that flows through Rome; of the Eurotas, where he had destroyed the power of Sparta; and the Isonzo, that he had crossed when he invaded Italy for the first time. He told of those rivers that resemble the lives of conquerors in the impetuosity of their currents, and that teach men that nothing is stable, that all passes, and that even the nomad peoples traverse the continents and do not return. He said that, lulled as a child by the sound of the Danube's waves Alaric, no doubt, would like to hear flow above his head the waters of some stream that, with the noise of its rolling pebbles, would recall to him the gallop of horses and the rattle of chariot wheels.

And since the Busento flowed at no great distance, the chiefs decided to bury their king's body in the river's bed, beneath its singing waters, in a sonorous peace where the impious curiosity of mankind could

never trouble his slumbers. It would be a tomb truly worthy of the conqueror and the Balthung, the one retreat that would preserve his body from profanation.

After the sun has dried the mud in a certain part of the exposed Busento river bottom, some Roman prisoners, accompanied only by the chiefs of clans and Alaric's bodyguard, one night dig a square ditch in the humid earth and rock.

Along the road leading from the camp to the river advances a strange procession. In silence, for the soldiers and slaves are sleeping, and none save those told off to attend to the details of his inhumation are to know the place where the Balthung's body is to rest.

Six gigantic warriors, their arms raised above their heads, carry a buckler on which lies the King of the Goths. His body is covered by a bearskin. On his breast they have placed his helm with aurochs horns, and his sword with its hilt wound with gold and silver wire.

The trembling torchlight, reflected by bronze helmets and golden collars and armlets, wakes dancing reflections. Following the body come men laden with wooden chests and leather bags. Restive white horses stamp impatient hoofs. Those who lead them hold their nostrils to prevent them from neighing.

The whole camp sleeps. The sentinels on guard around the fires, apprised of the strange ceremony, will never breathe a word of the fantastic procession that they may have seen pass through the forest that night.

An odor of earth and humidity announces that the river bed is near. The grave is ready, large and deep, as befits a chief. The officers pile the furs on the moist

ground so that the king's body may have a thick, warm rug to rest on. They receive the corpse from the hands of its bearers, and lay it on the buckler, its face turned in the direction of Rome. No one speaks a word. The men laden with chests and bags next come forward and place the booty royal, the riches of Greece and Rome, the treasure of Solomon, around the body.

Suddenly the horses snort and tremble; blood jets from their severed jugulars and inundates the tomb. The handsome steeds will accompany the venturesome and fearless horseman, who so often drew red lines across their satiny flanks, on his courses in the beyond. Their bodies, mingled with the treasures, will follow him through the phantom mists of death. He will still be able to stroke their manes, to hear their hoof beats, He will recognize their bridles plaqued with gold, the familiar saddle, the stirrups carved with monsters and dragons.

And a warrior who is passing to the other world must have slaves as well as horses, servitors who will groom his white chargers and furnish his arms. One by one the prisoners who have dug the grave are slaughtered. Their bodies fall on the bodies of the horses.

In the east a clear pallor heralds the dawn. It is time to make haste. First the grave is filled with large flat stones, and on these earth and rocks are piled. The chill of morning grows more pronounced. The sun is about to rise.

At daybreak the bed of the Busento is empty. The chiefs have returned to the camp. It is impossible to distinguish among the piles of rock the spot where Alaric reposes amid his treasures.



Lugubrious trumpet calls rouse those sleeping in the tents and wagons. Led by their officers, the multitude of Goths and captives advances to the dike that bars the river's course. Some of the captives attack the wall of rock and earth that stems the waters. Streamlets are already trickling through numerous fissures into the empty bed. They strike, they loosen the sheathing of beams and slabs that sustains the barrage. The waters spurt from every side. The clash of iron against stone, the grinding of the levers displacing the rocks, is heard.

Suddenly, with a thunderous report, the whole dike crumbles and melts away. In a torrent the river fills its old banks, rolling before it the corpses of the workmen, once more invading the channel it had dug for itself through the passing centuries. Its waters leaping tumultuously, with a noise like the galloping of horses and rolling of chariot wheels, it sweeps on above Alaric's tomb, and ever since the Busento has flowed with a clamor of crowds and battle above the conqueror's head.

The span of a great man's life has reached its close. The Goths fold up their tents, harness their horses to the heavy wagons and move away to wherever Fate may call them. And in the song hummed by the horsemen as they ride, there rings a new canto, added by the minstrels to the epic of their race, *The Lay of Alaric — Master of All!*

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# EUROPE IN 485.

Showing the territories of the  
GOTHIC NATIONS.

*Earlier Seats of the Goths thus (Goths A.D. 360)*

Scale of Miles  
50 0 50 100 200 300

